

CCITY COUNCIL  
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON FINANCE JOINTLY  
WITH THE COMMITTEE ON PARKS  
AND RECREATION AND THE  
COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION  
AND INFRASTRUCTURE

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May 13, 2025  
Start: 10:21 a.m.  
Recess: 4:25 p.m.

HELD AT: Council Chambers - City Hall

B E F O R E: Justin L. Brannan,  
Chairperson for Committee on  
Finance

Selvena Brooks-Powers,  
Chairperson for the Committee on  
Transportation

Shekar Krishnan,  
Chairperson for the Committee on  
Parks and Recreation

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

Diana I. Ayala  
Gale A. Brewer  
Selvena N. Brooks-Powers  
David M. Carr  
Amanda Farias  
Kamillah Hanks

## COUNCIL MEMBERS: (CONTINUED)

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Yusef Salaam  
Pierina Ana Sanchez  
Althea V. Stevens  
Nantasha M. Williams  
Julie Won  
Sandra Ung

## A P P E A R A N C E S (CONTINUED)

Joe Puleo  
President, Local 983, DC 37 (Urban Park Rangers  
and City Seasonal Aides)

Suhali Mendez  
New Lawyers for the Public Interest

Bhairavi Desai  
New York Taxi Workers Alliance

Suhali Mendez  
New York Taxi Workers Alliance

Richard Y Chow  
NYTWA

Allison Langley  
Adriano Averzano  
Pasang Sherpa  
Dorothy Leconte  
Wain Chin

Marlena Giga  
Urban Park Rangers/PEP officers

Carmen de Leon Treasurer  
Local 983, DC 37

Heather Lubov  
City Parks Foundation

Kaitlin Krause  
Parks and Recreation, Water Safety

Sommer Omar  
Allocate Funding to Repair the Tony Dapolito  
Recreation Center

Morgan Monaco  
Prospect Park Alliance

## A P P E A R A N C E S (CONTINUED)

John Surico  
Center for an Urban Future

Dejon Williams  
Local 299 DC37

Adam Ganser  
New Yorkers for Parks

Alia Soomro  
New York League of Conservative Voters

Emily Walker  
Natural Areas Conservancy

Merritt Birnbaum  
Riverside Park Conservancy

Gabrielle A Perez  
The Bronx is Blooming

Chelten Leggett  
Trust for Public Land

Constance Lesold  
Eastern Parkway Coalition

Giulietta Fiore  
Historic House Trust of NYC

Aresh Javadi  
More Gardens Fund

Ashely Kibria

Scott Daly  
NYJTL

Kuber Samcho Persaud

## A P P E A R A N C E S (CONTINUED)

Darren Hinton  
Play NYC

Christopher Leon  
Johnson

Kader Guerrab

Kevin O'Keefe  
Funding for Parks

Brent Bovenzi  
Open Streets funding

Saskia Haegens  
Open Streets funding

Andrew Berman  
Tony Dapolito Recreation Center

Cory Hasson  
Parks Budget

Rosa Chang  
Funding for Parks

Charlie Vallone

Jackson Chabot

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4 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Good morning. This is a  
5 microphone check for the executive budget hearing on  
6 Finance, jointly with Transportation and  
7 Infrastructure and Parks and Recreation. Today's  
8 date is May 13, 2025, located in the Chambers.  
9 Recording done by Pedro Lugo.

10 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Good morning and welcome to  
11 today's New York City Council Executive Budget  
12 Hearing for the Committee on Finance, joint with  
13 Transportation Infrastructure and Parks and  
14 Recreation. At this time, we ask that you please  
15 silence all electronic devices and at no time are you  
16 to approach the dais. If you'd like to sign up for  
17 in person testimony or have any another questions  
18 throughout the hearing, please see one of the  
19 Sergeant at Arms.

20 Chair Brannan, we're ready to begin.

21 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you Sergeant.  
22 [GAVEL]. Okay, good morning and welcome to day two  
23 of the FY26 Executive Budget hearing. Council Member  
24 Justin Brannan, I Chair the Council's Finance  
25 Committee. Today, we're talking about something that  
effects every single New Yorker, our streets, our  
sidewalks, our bridges and how we get around

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4 pedestrians, cyclists, baby strollers, cars, and  
5 buses. Today's focus - today's hearing focuses on  
6 the Department of Transportation. I'm proud to be  
7 joined by my colleague and Majority Whip Council  
8 Member Selvena Brooks-Powers who Chairs the Committee  
9 on Transportation. We've also been joined so far  
10 this morning by Council Members Louis, Ayala, Carr,  
11 Hudson, and De La Rosa and of course welcome back to  
12 a familiar face our former colleague Commissioner  
13 Ydanis Rodriguez and your team. Thank you all for  
14 being here and taking the time to walk us through the  
15 budget and answer our questions.

16 Just some quick housekeeping, as part of our new  
17 format, public testimony will happen right after we  
18 hear from agency officials, so if you're here to  
19 speak on the DOT Executive Budget, please just make  
20 sure you fill out a witness slip with the Sergeant at  
21 Arms in the back.

22 So, let's talk numbers. On May 1<sup>st</sup>, the  
23 Administration released its executive financial plan  
24 for FY26 to '29 with a proposed FY26 budget of \$115.1  
25 billion. DOT's proposed share is \$1.5 billion, which  
is about 1.3 percent of the total budget. That's a  
\$30 million increase from the preliminary plan back

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4 in January driven by collective bargaining costs,  
5 road resurfacing, ferry operations and utility  
6 adjustments but what the Council finds troubling is  
7 that as of March, DOT still had about 630 vacancies.  
8 That's hundreds of jobs unfilled, projects delayed,  
9 streets that go unrepaired, and New Yorkers that have  
10 to deal with unsafe conditions. It's not okay with  
11 us, we'll take it up with OMB as well but that's got  
12 to - those vacancies need to be filled.

13 In the City Council's Preliminary Budget  
14 response, we made it crystal clear. Restore the  
15 city's commitment to resurfacing at least 1,300 miles  
16 of roadway per year. Unfortunately the executive  
17 budget kept it at 1,100. That's just not a number,  
18 that means more potholes, longer waits for repairs  
19 and more frustration for everyday people who are just  
20 trying to get to work, school or the store.

21 A city that runs on its streets can't afford to  
22 let them fall apart and I know DOT agrees with that.  
23 My questions today will focus on the capital plan,  
24 the status of federal infrastructure dollars and what  
25 it's going to take to get us back on track literally.

26 With that, I'm going to turn it over to my Co-  
27 Chair for this hearing, Council Member Selvena

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4 Brooks-Powers so she can give her opening remarks.

5 Thank you.

6 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you and good  
7 morning and welcome to the Committee on  
8 transportation and Infrastructures joint hearing with  
9 the Committee on Finance on the Fiscal 2026 Executive  
10 Budget for the Department of Transportation.

11 My name once again is Selvena Brooks-Powers and I  
12 Chair the Committee on Transportation and  
13 Infrastructure. I have repeatedly emphasized that  
14 effective and efficient transportation is vital to  
15 the social mobility, economic growth and equity. It  
16 also serves a crucial role in community health and  
17 our overall wellbeing as a city. How and where we  
18 choose to invest our transportation dollars reflects  
19 the values and priorities of our city.

20 Today, we will hear from the Department of  
21 Transportation on its \$1.5 billion fiscal 2026  
22 executive budget.

23 DOT's Fiscal 2026 Budget in the Executive Plan is  
24 2.4 percent greater than its \$1.47 billion fiscal  
25 2026 preliminary budget presented in January.

DOT's capital commitment plan totals \$11.66  
billion across fiscal years 2025 to 2029. This is

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4 \$1.67 billion less than the preliminary capital  
5 commitment plan. The fiscal 2026 executive budget  
6 includes an additional \$34.6 million, \$22.8 million  
7 of which is from new needs.

8 As always, I plan to discuss with DOT how the  
9 city can more equitably invest in historically  
10 underserved communities like the ones I represent.  
11 Issues such as overnight residential tractor trailer  
12 parking remain the persistent concern in certain  
13 areas of our city and DOT is once again failing to  
14 meet the legal mandates the Council established  
15 several years ago in the Streets Plan, especially  
16 when it comes to bus lanes. Our plan to ask DOT  
17 about this at today's hearing and I look forward to  
18 gaining a better understanding, how this years budget  
19 will ensure that DOT can meet its legal requirements  
20 and more effectively serve communities citywide.

21 As Adam Clayton Powell Jr. once said, it's time  
22 to move beyond the rhetoric and into action. I look  
23 forward to better understanding how this years budget  
24 will enable DOT to meet legal requirements and more  
25 effectively serve communities citywide. Before we  
begin with testimony, I would like to thank Council  
staff for their hard work on preparing for this

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4 hearing. Adrian Drepaul, Senior Financial Analyst,  
5 Julia K. Haramis, Unit Head, Chima Obichere, Deputy  
6 Director, Mark Chen, Senior Committee Counsel, Kevin  
7 Kotowski and John Basile, Senior Policy Analyst and  
8 of course my staff including Julian Martin my  
9 director of budget and legislation as well as my  
10 Chief of Staff Renee Taylor.

11 And with that, I will now pass it back to Chair  
12 Brannan.

13 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you Chair Brooks-  
14 Powers. Before we continue, I also want to continue  
15 to thank the Council Finance staff who works very  
16 hard to put these hearings together. Specially today  
17 again to Julia and Adrian for preparing today's  
18 hearing. My Committee Counsel Brian Sarfo, my senior  
19 advisor Jon Yedin and a full team of analysts back at  
20 Mission Control who helped make this possible.

21 Just a reminder, we'll take public testimony on  
22 DOT and Parks right after the agency panels again.  
23 If you're here to testify, public testimony is  
24 probably not going to start until 2 p.m. but make  
25 sure you fill out a witness slip.

26 I'll now turn it over to the Committee Counsel to  
27 swear in our witnesses and we can start.

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2 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Good morning. Do you affirm  
3 to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but  
4 the truth before this Committee and to respond  
5 honestly to Council Member questions Commissioner  
6 Rodriguez?

7 YDANIS RODRIGUEZ: Yes, I do.

8 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Deputy Ochoa?

9 PAUL OCHOA: Yes, I do.

10 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Deputy Forgione?

11 MARGARET FORGIONE: Yes, I do.

12 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: And Assistant Commissioner  
13 Rodriguez.

14 RICK RODRIGUEZ: Yes, I do.

15 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you.

16 YDANIS RODRIGUEZ: Good morning. It's a great  
17 honor to be here. My fourth time coming to testify  
18 in the Executive Budget on behalf of Mayor Eric  
19 Adams. Chair Brooks-Powers, Chair Brannan and  
20 members of the Committee on Transportation and  
21 Infrastructure and Finance. Thank you for the great  
22 work that you do at the Council and all members of  
23 your Committee.

24 I'm Ydanis Rodriguez, Commissioner of the New  
25 York City Department of Transportation. With me

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4 today our First Deputy Commissioner Margaret  
5 Forgione, Executive Deputy Commissioner Paul Ochoa  
6 and Assistant Commissioner for Intergovernmental and  
7 Community Affairs Rick Rodriguez. He's not my  
8 brother.

9 Thank you for the opportunity to testify on  
10 behalf of Mayor Eric Adams on DOT's Fiscal Year 2026  
11 Executive Budget and Fiscal Year 2025-2035 Capital  
12 Plan.

13 With an over \$1.5 billion operating budget and  
14 \$33.5 billion capital program, DOT has almost 6,000  
15 employee safety inefficiencies managed. The numbers of  
16 vacancy that we have today is equal or similar to the  
17 pre-pandemic number.

18 As Mayor Adams announced, this is truly our best  
19 budget ever. DOT's charge in the New York City  
20 Charter is to provide for the safe and efficient and  
21 environmentally responsible movement of people and  
22 goods around our city, while managing 26 percent of  
23 the city line including 6,300 miles of the street and  
24 highways, 1,000 miles of sidewalk, 44,000  
25 intersections and 14,000 of those intersections, they  
26 have traffic lights and over 800 bridges and tunnels  
27 with both baseline funding and the approval of new

2 need for nearly everyone of our six divisions. This  
3 budget will help us achieve that mission.

4 We appreciate the Mayor's continued investment in  
5 DOT enabling us to maintain our programs and deliver  
6 for New Yorkers. In '22 Mayor increased the budget  
7 by 18. In '23 he had close to \$300 million and his  
8 commitment to put the dollars where it's needed has  
9 been very consistent in his three years and five  
10 months in this administration.

11 DOT's FY26 expense budget is \$1.5 billion and you  
12 can see the breakdown on this screen and in the chart  
13 in my testimony. There are \$124 million for bridges  
14 and maintenance, \$125 million for ferry operations  
15 and you will see the other breakdown in this screen.  
16 If you cannot see it from here, you have it in front  
17 of you.

18 On capital plan, DOT's FY25 and FY35 capital plan  
19 is \$33.9 billion and you can see the breakdown again  
20 on this screen and in my testimony. But that number  
21 also is represented by \$17.3 billion for bridges and  
22 that's very important when we look about the capital.  
23 From the \$34 billion capital for ten year plan, \$17  
24 billion is for the maintenance and investment to  
25 maintain our bridges in the state of good repair for

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our city. \$3.5 billion for resurfacing, \$3.6 billion for sidewalk, \$1.5 billion for street light signals and other areas, \$703 million for a Staten Island Ferry and \$1.3 billion for the facility and equipment needed to support DOT operations.

This budget provides funding to support critical DOT operations that keep the city moving. The Adams Administration include \$253 million over the span of the ten year capital plan for replacement of DOT's aging fleet of medium and heavy duty vehicles, which will allow us to establish a regular schedule for replacing these vehicles as they reach the end of their useful life. These will allow DOT to continue providing core services for all New Yorkers such as roadways resurfacing, curbs and median construction, pedestrian ramp upgrade and installations and bridge repair, just to name a few.

For our sidewalk division, which oversees 2,000 miles of sidewalk. This budget include \$4.7 million to keep up with the rising cost of steel, concrete and other materials needed for pedestrians ramp upgrade and installation.

Last year, DOT oversaw the upgrade or installation of pedestrian ramp at over 9,300

2 corners, and this new funding will allow us to  
3 continue this important work the help New York of all  
4 abilities cross the street safe.

5 For our roadways division, this budgets  
6 continually important \$280 million in baseline  
7 funding annually to allow us to research 1,100 lane  
8 miles and 50 bike lane miles each year. Also, this  
9 budget add an additional \$7.9 million to ensure we're  
10 fully funded for our resurfacing operation this year.

11 This month, we are celebrating bike month with  
12 month long programming and community event designed  
13 to encourage cycling, promote safety, and celebrate  
14 the city growing bike culture. There's so much to  
15 celebrate under the Eric Adams Administration. DOT  
16 has built a record of 8.5 miles of new protected bike  
17 lanes. That number is larger than the numbers of  
18 protected bike lane that has been built in the same  
19 prior time by any previous administration and the  
20 numbers of bike lane that we have built in New York  
21 city is larger than the numbers of protected bike  
22 lane that all larger city has built together in this  
23 country.

24 With this funding we agree additional 20 miles to  
25 support the over 226 million bike trips. Again 226

2 million is to put in perspective of bike trip that we  
3 had last year is much higher than 98 million bike  
4 trips that we had in 2009.

5 Our celebration includes a dozen lanes across all  
6 five boroughs, including free [INAUDIBLE 00:16:04]  
7 fitting bike light give away, education outreach for  
8 delivery workers and our Staten Island Borough  
9 Commissioner started initiative that we're looking to  
10 expand across the five borough, which is that in  
11 partnership with Bike New York, they will have a give  
12 away bike to underserved kid where more than 200  
13 bikes being donated by resident of Staten Island,  
14 Bike New York and other and that will be happening by  
15 the end of this month.

16 So, we're also willing by our colleague, the  
17 colleague here from Staten Island to join us that  
18 particular day. For our traffic operations division,  
19 we also have good news to share. We have identified  
20 our top vendor our new automatic enforcement contract  
21 and are working with them on a schedule to install  
22 new red light cameras thanks the expansion we secured  
23 in Albany last year. We are also working with our  
24 partners in the state legislature to reauthorize our  
25 lifesaving speed camera program set to expire in July

2 and the reason why is a lifesaving speed tools is  
3 because where we have installed a speed camera, we  
4 have seen a major reduction on speeding and a major  
5 reduction on speeding and a major reduction of  
6 crashes in those locations.

7 We look forward to work with the Council to pass  
8 the home rule message. On bridges, we continue our  
9 critical project to maintain 809 bridges and four  
10 tunnels in a state of good repair. This budget  
11 provides an additional \$42 million for the east 25<sup>th</sup>  
12 pedestrian bridges over the FDR tied to Science Park  
13 and Research Campus on Kips Bay, which will be a  
14 first of its kind job and educational center in the  
15 heart of New York City.

16 In this budget, the Adams Administration also  
17 baselined \$3.2 million and ten headcount between our  
18 bridges and planning divisions to support the  
19 inspection and repair of overhead sign and  
20 structures. With these funds, we are creating a  
21 first ever dedicated program to replace the over 50  
22 years signs on the highways throughout the city  
23 instead of handling them on a case by case basis with  
24 in house resources as we have previously done.

2 I'm also happy to say that we were granted  
3 expanded authority to our first in the nation weight  
4 in motion program in the recently passed state  
5 budget. As everyone know we did the first one around  
6 the BQE, made New York City the first one that is  
7 able to give a \$650 fine to those truck drivers who  
8 are using overweight trucks with more than 20,000  
9 pound of what is allowed in their vehicle.

10 We are now authorized to use weight in motion on  
11 the BQE as well as eight additional bridges including  
12 the Queens Borough of Manhattan and Williamsburg  
13 bridges. These will help keep overweight vehicle off  
14 our bridges and help us maintain them in a state of  
15 good repair. The reason why this is so critical is  
16 because when a bridge is built, their life is only 80  
17 or 90 years.

18 After that time, cities had to make major  
19 investment to keep those bridges in the state of good  
20 repair as we had to in the Brooklyn Bridge where in  
21 the last ten years we have invested around \$1  
22 billion.

23 For our transportation, planning and management  
24 division, this budget includes an increase of \$10  
25 million for our pavements markings contract this year

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4 on top of the \$30 million we already have baselined.

5 This funding is critical for allowing us to implement  
6 the Street Improvement Project, including new bus and  
7 bike lanes, pedestrian safety improvements and so  
8 much more to enhance street safety for all road  
9 users. This funding will allow us to replace faded  
10 marking to ensure that our street designs remain in  
11 good condition. And this budget includes \$101 million  
12 for street reconstruction project that built out  
13 critical safety improvement in permanent concrete  
14 materials. This includes \$79.6 million for the four  
15 phase of our Queens Boulevard redesign that will  
16 stand the improvement from Yellowstone Boulevard to  
17 Union Turnpike.

18 \$13.3 million for our Northern Boulevard Douglas  
19 Connector project to build out the cyclists  
20 transition on Northern Boulevard at the Cross Island  
21 Parkway. \$4.7 million for the [00:21:36] avenue  
22 Street Scape project that will expand public space  
23 and improve pedestrian safety in the Broadway  
24 junction area. And \$3.7 million for the Park Avenue  
25 Pedestrian Safety Improvement Project that will slow  
traffic and create a new public space under the BQE.

2 I'm so happy to say that in this budget, the  
3 Mayor Eric Adams Administration has a step up with  
4 funding to support two Hallmark Public Realm  
5 programs, Open Street and Dining out NYC. These  
6 programs were a critical lifeline for the city during  
7 the pandemic and recovery period. Largely funded by  
8 Federal Corona virus stimulus funds. With the  
9 stimulus funding expiring this year, the program  
10 could only continue with an injection of city funds.  
11 This investment ensures New Yorkers can continue to  
12 enjoy these transformative programs that have  
13 reshaped our street as places to meet, dine, and  
14 spend quality time. And that investment is even much  
15 needed in underserved community or the institution  
16 that is ready to put this money in those programs.  
17 For dining out NYC, this budget added \$3.8 million  
18 this fiscal year to replace federal funding we once  
19 had for this program.

20 For open street, this budget adds \$2.1 million to  
21 replace the federal funding, which will allow us to  
22 continue supporting open street throughout the city.  
23 Last month, we opened decision open street with  
24 [00:23:34] connecting open street and plaza's across  
25 the city while providing access to over 1,000 miles

2 of New York City bike network and showcasing public  
3 art and community programming.

4 And looking ahead for this years summer street as  
5 a major announce, we are planning to extend it to 400  
6 blocks to celebrate the city 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary. This  
7 budget also provide \$50 million for the Gotham Arches  
8 Project, which reconstruct the area by the Brooklyn  
9 Bridge with increased community connectivity and  
10 public space and the Administration look forward to  
11 continue to work with the community on this project.  
12 Thank you Rosa for the great job. She was here and  
13 then she left but Rosa and many members of the China  
14 Town community, they've been great partners working  
15 with us with that project.

16 We are also proud to be part of one of the first  
17 rezoning of this administration with the Bronx Metro  
18 North Rezoning, which will bring four new Metro North  
19 station to the East Bronx and create nearly 7,000  
20 homes including 1,700 permanently income restricted  
21 affordable housing and 10,000 jobs. All close to  
22 public transit. This budget includes \$208 million  
23 for new project to support this rezoning.

24 Finally, DOT continues to be a leader in minority  
25 and women owned business enterprise or MWBE

1 contracting investment. When I first stepped into my  
2 role as Commissioner, the agency MWBE number was only  
3 11 percent. We know how hard it is to move those  
4 numbers. However today it is with great pride that I  
5 coming in my four years as a Commissioner to share  
6 with you that progress we have made in the most  
7 recent fiscal year of our MWBE was in 32 percent in  
8 year to date, our MWBE numbers is 37 percent. This  
9 achievement underscore a commitment to promote  
10 inclusivity and provide meaningful support to diverse  
11 businesses with our community, reflecting a broader  
12 vision of equity and opportunity for all.

14 In this budget, we were given \$3.7 million in  
15 FY26 to continue our MWBE contract to cleaning and  
16 vegetation control out on highway service roads,  
17 which will allow us to continue this important  
18 program.

19 SPEAKING IN SPANISH [00:26:36]- [00:27:06].

20 In conclusion, we are thankful for the  
21 opportunity to testify before the Council today and  
22 for your continued partnership. We are grateful to  
23 the Adams Administration for investing in DOT.  
24 Everyday the almost 6,000 people men and women that  
25 work so hard at DOT take this job very seriously and

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4 I want to thank every single member of this agency  
5 for being the leader of the larger Department of  
6 Transportation that any city have in this country.

7 We now welcome any questions.

8 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you for your  
9 testimony Commissioner. We've also been joined by  
10 Council Members Narcisse, Williams and Restler. I  
11 want to talk about federal funding just to set the  
12 table. On January 27<sup>th</sup> of this year, the Trump  
13 Administration issued a directive to pause federal  
14 loan and grant spending. The directive was quickly  
15 rescinded two days later but an executive order  
16 issued by the President to review funding remains in  
17 effect.

18 The level of federal funding that the city and  
19 DOT will receive remains a serious area of concern.  
20 The executive plan includes \$135.3 million of federal  
21 funding for DOT in FY25, which is about 8.8 percent  
22 of DOT's budget and \$78.8 million for FY26, which is  
23 about 5.2 percent. So, could you tell us what are  
24 DOT's main sources of federal funding?

25 YDANIS RODRIGUEZ: I'm going to start and then  
Paul will take it. When I was a Chairman of this  
Committee of Transportation and you know especially

2 my first year when I had the budget in front of me  
3 and I say why we have these numbers and then by  
4 October, the numbers increased and the whole team,  
5 they education me to understand that you know it is  
6 by the end of this year that we get to know how much  
7 federal funding and other sources is coming to this  
8 agency.

9 So, I can say that the agency has a great team of  
10 financing grants. We go after every single dollar.  
11 We continue planning with no difference and we have  
12 been planning in the last couple years because we had  
13 not received any notice from DC that any federal  
14 funding being stopped. So, that's why we are  
15 focusing and Mayor's Adams say all of us being laser  
16 focused. So, we are not right now being distracted  
17 by any noise that may come from this city because we  
18 had not received any notice or any federal funding  
19 being stopped.

20 PAUL OCHOA: Thanks Chair for that question.  
21 Most of our federal funding comes from US DOT, FTY  
22 funding and FHWA funding, so the Federal Transit  
23 Administration and the Federal Highway  
24 Administration, most of the funding is programmed  
25 into our budget, what we call formula funds, which

2 means it's a lump sump amount that flows through the  
3 state that comes to us. We program a lot of it in  
4 the various budget for example.

5 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Is there a contingency plan  
6 for - has the Administration given any orders for a  
7 contingency plan to prepare for a potential budget  
8 shortfall?

9 PAUL OCHOA: Yeah listen, we're always talking to  
10 OMB and City Hall about these things. We sincerely  
11 hope that the federal administration does not rescind  
12 any funds that are used for critical operations but  
13 we are in conversations with them to make sure that  
14 one, we know exactly where the federal funding is  
15 coming from and then you know plan accordingly. At  
16 this point, as the Commissioner mentioned, no federal  
17 funds have been rescinded. It's certainly not  
18 formula funds. I think there was a lot of  
19 competitive friends from the last Administration that  
20 we're working through but at this point, nothing has  
21 been canceled or rescinded.

22 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Are there any federal  
23 grants that DOT has applied for that you're waiting  
24 to hear back on?

2 PAUL OCHOA: Yes. We have about ten I believe -  
3 uh seven, around seven that we applied late last  
4 Administration that we have not heard back.

5 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: And is that cause for  
6 concern? You typically have heard back by now?

7 PAUL OCHOA: Listen, it's hard to say what  
8 typically is in this federal Administration but what  
9 I would say is most of our competitive grants were  
10 implementation grants, which means we are applying  
11 for a capital project that we already have programmed  
12 in the budget but it's all to say that most of those  
13 projects are fully funded with city tax dollars.

14 So, any award would be displacing city tax  
15 dollars so it wouldn't necessarily stop the program.  
16 We're full steam ahead with our capital plan.

17 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: And the ten grants that you  
18 mentioned, what's the total?

19 PAUL OCHOA: I believe about \$30- something  
20 million. I can get back to you on that.

21 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay uhm, I'm going to talk  
22 about a couple areas of underspending in DOT's  
23 budget. The FY25 budget for OTPS traffic operations  
24 is \$480.9 million. Over the last two years DOT has  
25 spent around \$470 million annually in this unit of

1  
2 appropriation. By the end of the third quarter last  
3 year, expenditures in this area already exceeded \$425  
4 million. Yet, through the first three quarters of  
5 the current fiscal year, the agency has spent only  
6 \$347 million on these expenses. So, why have  
7 expenditures this year lagged last years expenditures  
8 in this particular unit of appropriation?

9 PAUL OCHOA: Yeah, I can take it. Uhm, you're  
10 right Council Member, a lot of our work is critical.  
11 Sometimes it can be weather dependent for example.  
12 We can have an issue with the contractor for example.  
13 What we do is we do spend every single cent at the  
14 close of the fiscal year and if there is work, for  
15 example that happen in this fiscal year that we  
16 didn't pay out, we set up accruals. It's a technical  
17 process where we pay the next fiscal years dollars to  
18 close the gap in this fiscal year.

19 So, it's hard to give you an exact answer of why  
20 the money hasn't been spent but I can assure you it  
21 gets spent, every single cent gets spent.

22 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: So, the FY26 budget for  
23 this U of A is over \$490 million.

2 PAUL OCHOA: That sounds right. U of A includes  
3 two large operations, it's traffic ops and the  
4 Traffic, Planning and Management division.

5 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: And do you think that's  
6 adequate to fund the need in the next fiscal year?

7 PAUL OCHOA: We think so. Listen, we do move  
8 money around within U of A and sometimes across U of  
9 A just to make sure that the entire agency is funded  
10 but we take a close look at that and we have an  
11 amazing budget team who keeps very close track of  
12 spending to make sure that one, the encumbrance's  
13 that are set up accordingly to pay out contracts and  
14 if we are over encumbering, which means we are over  
15 committing, that we de-encumber to move money around.

16 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay, moving to the capital  
17 plan. The DOT's Executive Capital Commitment Plan  
18 for FY25-29 is 12.5 percent less than the Capital  
19 Commitment Plan in the preliminary budget. It's a  
20 decrease of \$1.67 billion. Why was there such a  
21 large decrease in the DOT capital plan?

22 PAUL OCHOA: Were you talking about a specific  
23 fiscal year. I'm sorry, I didn't catch the first  
24 part of the -

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4 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Yeah, the DOT's Executive  
5 Capital Commitment Plan for FY25-29?

6 PAUL OCHOA: So, the Capital Commitment, we move  
7 money around. If for example, we have capital  
8 stretch exercises. It's an accounting sort of  
9 exercise. What we do and we work with OMB and City  
10 Hall to make sure that we don't actually impact  
11 schedules, which is the most important thing. If a  
12 project is funded say in Fiscal '27 and we need to  
13 move the money up to Fiscal '25, we do that all the  
14 time. It does require constant coordination with OMB  
15 and City Hall but we do that. So, if there is a  
16 decrease in Fiscal '25 and we move money around to  
17 Fiscal '26 and '27, it's just in accounting to make  
18 sure that we're not over committing and the city is  
19 not bonding out more than what it needs to in Fiscal  
20 '25.

21 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: So, how did you determine  
22 along with OMB which projects would be pushed out to  
23 later years in the plan?

24 PAUL OCHOA: Yeah, the first order that we do is  
25 to align projects with schedules. So, we work with  
DDC, DEP, a lot of our street projects, for example  
have DEP components and they're managed by DDC. So,

1 the first thing we ask is say, okay, of all these  
2 projects programmed for Fiscal '25, which one of  
3 these are likely going to slip into Fiscal '26? And  
4 if that - and we work with all three agencies to make  
5 sure that's - and OMB to make sure that's the case.  
6 Once we see that, then we say okay, well if that  
7 project slip, then we are going to move the money  
8 accordingly. And then if we don't meet the target by  
9 just aligning with schedules, then we look at  
10 projects that we can you know move out the funding  
11 with the understanding that the funding is going to  
12 be brought back into a fiscal year to make sure that  
13 it advances. We haven't delayed a project because of  
14 any stretch exercises yet.

16 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay, I want to talk about  
17 street resurfacing. I mentioned in my opening  
18 remarks the previously stated goal was to resurface  
19 1,300 lane miles annually. That was reduced to  
20 1,100. The Council called on the Administration to  
21 increase capital funding for street resurfacing by  
22 \$40 million and that was to allow DOT to return to  
23 resurface 1,300 lane miles annually.

2 Was any additional funding related to the  
3 Council's request to increase the city's repaving  
4 effort included in the Executive Plan?

5 YDANIS RODRIGUEZ: I'm going to pass it to our  
6 First Deputy Commissioner who oversee all operation  
7 at DOT.

8 MARGARET FORGIONE: Thank you so our resurfacing  
9 budget was increased by \$7.9 million this year or  
10 this coming year and in terms of the lane miles,  
11 we're very proud each and every year to always meet  
12 our lane mile target. Resurfacing is critical for us  
13 to keep our roadways in good condition and avoid  
14 street defects forming and things of that nature. We  
15 would be open to discussing increasing the lane mile  
16 target but at this time, we have that increase that I  
17 mentioned in the budget.

18 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay and in FY24, the  
19 average cost per lane mile resurfaced was just under  
20 \$200,000. Is that still accurate?

21 MARGARET FORGIONE: Yes, that's correct.

22 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay. I want to talk about  
23 fake license plates and the impact that they have on  
24 revenue collection. According to an audit by the  
25 Comptroller, the faced obscure and fake license

2 plates cost the city about \$100 million a year in  
3 lost revenue. The proliferation of fake and defaced  
4 plates has gotten out of control and while there have  
5 been occasional crackdowns, they're not enough to  
6 truly address the issue. We all see - we're all you  
7 know in traffic stuck behind these cars who have a  
8 leaf on their plate or something blocking a letter on  
9 their plate.

10 We believe the city is leaving considerable  
11 amount of money on the table here and that it's clear  
12 that we need upgraded technology to better address  
13 these enforcement challenges. We've learned that  
14 cars sold since 2019 are all connected via GPS,  
15 telematics API, meaning you know no matter what your  
16 license plate says, we have the technology to figure  
17 out who owns the car and how to apply that fine or  
18 ticket. Has DOT explored the use of any updated  
19 camera technology that would allow it to issue  
20 violations based on GPS detection rather than just  
21 the license plates that are not always real or  
22 visible?

23 YDANIS RODRIGUEZ: First of all, I know our legal  
24 team, the general counsel that we have, they are  
25 doing a great job and one of the things that we have

2 done recently is we passed a new rule at DOT that now  
3 empower NYPD to be able to give a ticket to those who  
4 are - who park a car with an obstructed plate.

5 So, before NYPD could stop someone that they  
6 would see in the street if that person was driving  
7 the car. However, the law didn't allow NYPD to go  
8 and be able to leave a ticket to a car that was  
9 parked in the street with obstructed license.

10 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Hmm, hmm.

11 YDANIS RODRIGUEZ: So, this is one of the things  
12 that we have done recently, which we passed a rule at  
13 DOT is that now empower NYPD to give a ticket to  
14 those cars that they are parked in our street that  
15 have an obstructed plate. As we are - as we also  
16 have selected, the new vendor for our speed camera,  
17 we've been in conversation on what other feature they  
18 come with the technology. At some point, we are  
19 restricted because of how the State authorize New  
20 York City to use the speed camera doesn't allow for  
21 us to do certain things.

22 So, more than happy to work with the Council to  
23 figure out how we can expand as we're going through  
24 the reauthorization of the speed camera to see if we  
25 can be allowed also to use those new speed cameras

2 that we've been installing with a vendor and be able  
3 to address what you're saying.

4 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Has a vendor been chosen  
5 for the -

6 YDANIS RODRIGUEZ: They've been chosen as part of  
7 the process. They're which is the current vendor  
8 that being running the largest speed camera in the  
9 nation, which is ours. They've been selected as part  
10 of the process, now we're going through the whole  
11 other process of negotiation with some details, going  
12 through a Comptroller but based on the Committee that  
13 did the whole evaluation of everyone who responds,  
14 they were the one that is for hire and there's a new  
15 process I know Paul would like to add anything about  
16 that.

17 PAUL OCHOA: Yeah, thanks Commissioner. We're  
18 very excited about this new contract. This is the  
19 first time that the automated enforcement program  
20 gets our feet out. If you recall the program crew  
21 from a small pilot to just what it was now, the  
22 agency never really put out an RFP to one, make sure  
23 that the contract translates for the agency and two,  
24 see what new technologies were out there. I think as  
25 the Commissioner mentioned, this new contract is

2 structured in a way that if something, if a new  
3 technology comes in, we can quickly pivot to it. So,  
4 we're very excited. I do want to make a point about  
5 the revenue. I think you're perhaps right about the  
6 revenue. I think the way we see automated  
7 enforcement is about behavior change and if these  
8 folks are not getting tickets then they're likely not  
9 going to see the behavior change, which is ultimately  
10 what we want out of the automated enforcement  
11 program.

12 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: So, with the new vendor or  
13 the renewal, is there talk about updating the  
14 technology in the cameras?

15 YDANIS RODRIGUEZ: Yes, they have -

16 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Just hit your mic.

17 YDANIS RODRIGUEZ: Yeah so I would like to afford  
18 Rick also to add after I share where we are today.  
19 So, as part of this process, we have an industry day  
20 where those were responded to the request for  
21 proposal, they showcase everything that they have,  
22 the current and new technology.

23 So, I think that everyone including - everyone  
24 who responded by including the one that's being  
25 scoring higher which is the one that the agency is

2 now in negotiation with details on the contract.

3 They are open to do new things but again, more than  
4 happy to continue conversation with you guys.

5 However, we are restricted by the state on what more,  
6 how can we use those images? And Rick, I don't know  
7 if you'd like to -

8 RICK RODRIGUEZ: Yeah, thank you Commissioner.  
9 Thank you Chair. Just to go a half step backwards.  
10 On the reauthorization of the speed camera bill,  
11 we're going to include some of the amendments to do  
12 increased sharing with the state to combat an  
13 obstructed license plate. So, that's a thing that  
14 you'll probably see soon and an additional bill that  
15 we are also in support of in the legislature is the  
16 Intelligence Speed Assist program, which we've been  
17 calling I'd say, which would have that sort of  
18 telematics technology. So, for those worst offenders  
19 of our speed and red light cameras or they have 11  
20 points on their license, you would be required to  
21 have an installation of an ISA device. And so, we  
22 would have that GPS technology and the vehicles for  
23 those worst offenders.

24 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay, sorry we've also been  
25 joined by Council Members Rivera, Salaam, Ariola and

2 Sanchez. I have a couple more but I want to - in  
3 interest of time, I'm going to turn it over to Chair  
4 Brooks Powers. Thank you.

5 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you. I'm going  
6 to kick it off with Streets Plan. In DOT's most  
7 recent Streets Plan report, which was released this  
8 past March, the Department admitted that in 2024, it  
9 only built 13.5 miles of protected bus lanes. Which  
10 once again, is far short of the 30 miles required  
11 annually. DOT is also required to install transit  
12 signal priority at 1,000 intersections annually but  
13 completed only 766 last year. The report noted that  
14 DOT installed roughly 29 miles of protected bike  
15 lanes in 2024, which is an improvement but still less  
16 than the 58 mile benchmark required by legislation.  
17 Does DOT have enough funding to meet all Streets Plan  
18 mandates?

19 YDANIS RODRIGUEZ: We always appreciate any new  
20 funding, more funding. It's always great, however,  
21 as someone like you that have been in BNT leadership,  
22 we know also that we have manage every single dollar,  
23 so we're doing a good job when it came to the  
24 resources that we have.

2 Our challenge is it's not only the resources; our  
3 challenge is also how can we get to 50 mile protected  
4 bike lane when we know that there is so many areas in  
5 the city where we have a lot of constituency that  
6 they don't want to have those bike lanes in those  
7 areas. As I said before, I wanted to do the bus lane  
8 at Fordham Avenue but all the elected officials, the  
9 BID in Little Italy, the Fordham University, they all  
10 went against it.

11 So like you know I would like to be a leader like  
12 Gale Brewer. Same thing as how I feel. I don't  
13 think that the number that we have put in the street  
14 master plan, which was a bill that I was a co-  
15 sponsor. That was a bill that I passed when I was a  
16 chairman of the Committee of Transportation. Unless  
17 there's appetite in the commitment of the 51 Council  
18 Members who say I want bus lane and bike lane in my  
19 districts. If that would be the commitment, we can  
20 built it but with the reality that we feel today, we  
21 wouldn't be able to do the 50 mile protected bike  
22 lane and the 30 mile protected bus lane.

23 And even with a picture, the 29 miles that you  
24 referred that all of us should be very proud, is  
25

2 larger than the protected bike lane that all larger  
3 cities together build in this country.

4 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you for that  
5 response Commissioner, even though I think we've uhm  
6 all come to the conclusion that the responsibility of  
7 implementation of the law rests on DOT, not on the  
8 Council Members.

9 YDANIS RODRIGUEZ: If you give me green light -  
10 if the Council give me green light for me to do any  
11 bus lane and bike lane that I want in this agency,  
12 then I can do the 50 miles and the 30 miles.

13 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: If you were able to  
14 have additional funding, how much would it require?  
15 Because I know you said that you could do more if you  
16 had more. What would that dollar amount look like?

17 YDANIS RODRIGUEZ: The funding is only one other  
18 piece. I think that again I do appreciate you know  
19 and all of us should be very proud of what we have  
20 built. Two weeks ago I had to seal the larger bike  
21 tour in the globe which is in South Africa. Together  
22 with the one from the 3<sup>rd</sup> one in Little Italy and the  
23 second which is New York City and the person for  
24 South Africa will do the larger bike tour say, I have  
25

2 never been in the city with the infrastructure that  
3 provides so much safety for biking.

4 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Commissioner, in the  
5 interest of time what is the dollar amount? That  
6 would be helpful to add.

7 YDANIS RODRIGUEZ: Our challenge to build our  
8 bike land and bus lane is the money. It's support  
9 from the Council.

10 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: I'm going back to  
11 your first statement when you said that if you had  
12 more obviously it would be welcomed. What does more  
13 look like? What is that dollar amount?

14 YDANIS RODRIGUEZ: More than happy Chair to  
15 follow with you and the Chair of Finance and the  
16 Council if there's any - any different number for me  
17 is like with -

18 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: I mean, you're at a  
19 Finance hearing right now, do you have a dollar  
20 amount?

21 YDANIS RODRIGUEZ: Yeah, I will say I am happy  
22 with the numbers that we had to build a bike lane and  
23 bus lane. If I get more, I welcome it. Our  
24 challenge to build to fulfill our goal for the Street  
25 Master Plan. By the way, it's not only bus lane and

2 bike lane. The Street Master Plan is larger than  
3 that. The Street Master Plan also established a  
4 matrix on how we measure the investments that we do  
5 in underserved community.

6 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you  
7 Commissioner. I'm sorry because I just want to make  
8 sure because I know we have a lot of members that  
9 have questions, so I just want to get through my  
10 questions quickly. Does DOT have enough staff to  
11 meet all the mandates and if not, how many additional  
12 positions would it require?

13 YDANIS RODRIGUEZ: We can do the work with the  
14 number of staff that we have right now.

15 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Okay. How does the  
16 Executive Plan support and prioritize the benchmarks  
17 in the Streets Plan?

18 PAUL OCHOA: Thanks Chair. One key component of  
19 the Streets Plan is markings. There's two types  
20 generalizing two types of markings contract. There  
21 is the capital markings contract, which follows  
22 resurfacing but then there's the expense markings  
23 which are done with - these are the one that do SIPs,  
24 daylighting. We got an extra \$10 million to increase  
25 the work that we're doing on our markings starting

2 Fiscal 2026. This is a really, really helpful  
3 investment for all Streets Plan related goals.

4 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you. When it  
5 comes to bus lanes, DOT has consistently failed to  
6 meet these requirements and has fallen behind the  
7 aggregate five year target. How is DOT prioritizing  
8 bus lane improvement and what plans are in place to  
9 meet the required mandates?

10 YDANIS RODRIGUEZ: Yeah, one of the things that  
11 the plan established is that when we finalize our  
12 number and report to the Council, by law, we have to  
13 report in February. That's when we are able to make  
14 sure other companies that we have and provide the  
15 report of what we have accomplished the year before.

16 So, when we - when the Council established in the  
17 Street Master Plan the numbers of bus lane, it didn't  
18 talk only about the numbers of protected bus lane, he  
19 also allowed the agency to count on the camera  
20 enforcement. So, if we add the camera enforcement to  
21 the numbers of protected bike lane that we have  
22 built, definitely the number is beyond more than 30  
23 miles.

24 But when we had this conversation, our question  
25 is only around the protected bus lane and we never

2 talk about the positive impact in how will we measure  
3 the enforcement with our camera. MTA was able to get  
4 Albany now to be able to enforce double parking and  
5 those miles also should be counted by law but usually  
6 we only talk about the seven miles of new protected  
7 bus lane, the three miles and we never talk about the  
8 other miles on how the camera installed in our buses  
9 are also - should be also added.

10 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: I don't know that I  
11 agree with that analysis. Only because the  
12 enforcement by cameras in the bus lane came several  
13 years after the implementation of the Streets Plan  
14 law but I hear you. Why has the agency been able to  
15 come closer to meeting the bike lane requirement but  
16 not the targets for bus lanes or bus stops?

17 YDANIS RODRIGUEZ: Yeah Chair and of course, I  
18 always say I never talk unless I have the whole truth  
19 on anything but I believe and we can double check on  
20 the number but I believe that it is stated that the  
21 camera enforcement also can be added. Not can, is  
22 part of counting how many miles we have done it. Our  
23 conversation have been always been about new  
24 protected bus lane and yes, I want to do more and I  
25 think that even this day, like I know that my great

1 friend, Council Member De La Rosa, you know who you  
2 know we have done a lot of things together in my  
3 previous role and in her previous role. Like right  
4 now we had a proposal to do a bus lane at Broadway  
5 from 155<sup>th</sup> to 225<sup>th</sup> but not only what we want to do is  
6 that when we go and meet with the Community Board and  
7 we hear from some members of Community Board, we hear  
8 from some business owner, we have to navigate with  
9 that reality that we want to do like three miles of  
10 bus lane there. And I know that we have  
11 conversation, the Council Member being open but also  
12 we know that when we go to my old district that I  
13 used to represent, when I leave, there's a lot of  
14 opposition so my thing is yes, I want to and I have  
15 those three miles counted at the expectation that we  
16 can do it this year. But I also know and I don't  
17 want to put the Council Member on the spot because I  
18 know that's a reality that we face. It's not only  
19 what we want to do but it's also how the local  
20 business - and this needs precision. When we need  
21 the bus lane at 181<sup>st</sup> and I appreciate also her  
22 support because I live there. I still keep in touch  
23 with my district. Some people didn't want to do the  
24 bus lane on 181<sup>st</sup>. The Council Member was supporting  
25

1 that and other advocates but we also know that from  
2 Community Board and other people, they say, we don't  
3 want that bus lane at 181<sup>st</sup> and they came out with a  
4 whole story that the bus lane are killing the small  
5 businesses.  
6

7 While we have found out through SBS and other  
8 study that if bus lane doesn't have a negative impact  
9 in small business. Many of those consumers who go to  
10 the - buy in the mom and pop store, they use the bus  
11 lane. They use the buses. So I again, I agree with  
12 you. I think to build more protected bus lane is  
13 critical. One million people are using the buses  
14 every day. Most of them, they are working class  
15 people. Most of them, they don't have the time.  
16 They struggle to pay the bill. They know the one  
17 that's speaking loud in our Community Board and I  
18 think that is important.

19 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you. Thank you  
20 Commissioner. I just want to reiterate my last  
21 question. Why has the agency been able to closer to  
22 meeting the bike lane requirement but not the targets  
23 of the bus lanes or bus stops?

24 YDANIS RODRIGUEZ: Can you rephrase the question?  
25

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4 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: I essentially want to  
5 know, the agency has been able to come closer to the  
6 goals or the benchmarks for the bike lanes compared  
7 to the bus stops and the bus lanes. And so, I want  
8 to know why the agency - like what's happening that  
9 the agency has been able to be more successful in one  
10 area, not the other one? Both I'm sure are being met  
11 with community opposition anyway.

12 YDANIS RODRIGUEZ: Look, I again, I want to - we  
13 have equal priority when it comes to building  
14 protected bus lane because I say if you live in  
15 Manhattan, more than 75 people who live in this  
16 borough, they don't have car and I live in Manhattan  
17 too but there's a reason. We have the best public  
18 transportation system. We have trains from the west  
19 to the east. We have bus connection from you know  
20 14<sup>th</sup> Street, 34, 47-

21 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Commissioner, I would  
22 argue it's not really equal because when you talk  
23 about the protected bus lanes, we're talking about  
24 13.5 miles out of 30 miles and then when we talk  
25 about the bike lanes, the protected bike lanes, we're  
talking about 29 miles out of 50. It's not equal and  
the agency often you know advocates. My office, my

1  
2 colleagues around the protected bike lanes but I  
3 don't see the same effort behind the bus lanes. But  
4 I'm trying to understand from your perspective in  
5 terms of the agency, something is going better when  
6 we talk about the protected bike lanes but there's a  
7 gap or a deficit happening with the bus lanes and the  
8 bus stops. So, I'm trying to understand and I'm  
9 asking you to help me understand what that difference  
10 is.

11 YDANIS RODRIGUEZ: To uphold the space that you  
12 take for building a bus lane, bus way. It is larger  
13 than the space that we take to build a bike lane.  
14 Like, I did a bike lane at Deichmann. I wanted to do  
15 two bike lanes in north and south. At the end of the  
16 day, I negotiated with DOT because there was a lot  
17 opposition in my community and I was only - I only  
18 did a bike lane in the north park of Deichmann, which  
19 is like a two way together.

20 So, the amount of space I take is not a sample of  
21 the bus lane and the bike lane and again, I want  
22 Council Member to help me to take both lanes to your  
23 district and bike lane to your district too.

24 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you  
25 Commissioner. I'm going to pivot to red light

1 cameras. In October 2024, Governor Hochul signed an  
2 expansion of the red light camera program into law.  
3 The legislation allows the city to quadruple the  
4 number of red light camera locations from 150 to 600.  
5 That's the largest expansion of the program in the  
6 city's history. The legislation also extends the  
7 program until 2027. Which neighborhoods have seen  
8 the highest increase in camera revenue?  
9

10 YDANIS RODRIGUEZ: We are - first of all, we're  
11 working with the new vendor that we selected based on  
12 scoring but now we had to work with you know all the  
13 details through the process when it comes to  
14 installing the new red light camera. So far we're  
15 operating on our 150 locations that we have and we  
16 are in conversation with the selected vendor on  
17 expanding to our 600 locations.

18 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Oh, so you haven't  
19 expanded yet?

20 YDANIS RODRIGUEZ: Excuse me Chair. I think that  
21 if you don't mind, I want to say that we all again  
22 should be proud of this. It is under your time in  
23 our administration that we were able to persuade  
24 Albany to allow to move from 150 locations to 600, as  
25 also we were able to get in this Administration in

1 your time to expand the speed camera 22, 24 from 6  
2 a.m. to 10 p.m. to be 24/7. So, at this moment,  
3 again, where do we have red light camera? Where do  
4 we have speed camera where is data is showing that we  
5 had to focus more in those areas.  
6

7 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Commissioner, I just  
8 as you to lower the defense because last time I  
9 checked myself and my colleagues supported the  
10 expansion of the red light cameras as well. My  
11 question is just to understand the data set on where  
12 the program is right now. So, I'm asking, are you  
13 saying that you're only at the 150 now?

14 YDANIS RODRIGUEZ: Yes.

15 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: You guys haven't  
16 expanded yet, okay thank you for that clarification  
17 because then that can help me skip a few questions  
18 here.

19 And in terms of this expansion, does DOT have  
20 adequate funding for speed cameras warning signage?

21 YDANIS RODRIGUEZ: Yes, we do.

22 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Okay, are cameras  
23 occasionally moved to different locations with the  
24 aim of increasing the number of violations issued?  
25 Like, are you moving them around that way?

2 YDANIS RODRIGUEZ: Are you referring to the red  
3 light cameras?

4 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Yes.

5 PAUL OCHOA: The red light cameras are fixed so  
6 those are not being moved. The new ones-

7 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: The newer ones are  
8 going to -

9 PAUL OCHOA: Yeah, the new ones hopefully will be  
10 moved but the maximizing revenue is not the target.  
11 It is about where the data is showing more crashes  
12 and more speeding.

13 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you for that.  
14 How is the community notified when a new camera is  
15 slated to be placed or how will you notify us?

16 MARGARET FORGIONE: So Chair, the idea with all  
17 of our camera enforcement programs is we don't want  
18 the public to change their behavior in response to  
19 believing or knowing if there is a camera. So, we do  
20 not notify the public of any of the new cameras and  
21 the concept is that we just hope people won't speed  
22 and people wont run red lights wherever they are not  
23 knowing if there is a camera and hopefully knowing  
24 that this is the best for safety.

2 PAUL OCHOA: But we've seen other municipalities  
3 that do have that as a requirement. People you know  
4 proceed and obey that one spot but generally speed in  
5 other locations. So, just as a best practice, we  
6 don't tell driver where those cameras and enforcement  
7 are.

8 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: I do feel like that's  
9 inconsistent with what the agency has said in the  
10 past because I know in conversations, we wanted to  
11 make sure whether its speed cameras, red light camera  
12 that it's not like a I got you situation. The goal  
13 is to change behavior ultimately. So, now the agency  
14 is saying that you don't want the public to know  
15 where they are. So, it's an impression of being I  
16 got you.

17 YDANIS RODRIGUEZ: We've been very consistent  
18 with the messes. If you want to drive 45, 55, 65,  
19 you take the highway. If you're on the street in New  
20 York City, it is 25 miles per hour and even with the  
21 Simon law now we can install 20 miles per hour and  
22 if we want to go citywide, the Council has to pass a  
23 law to review the speed limit but the message to any  
24 place about we want what we promote and educate  
25

2 people is about drive at a speed that is allowed in  
3 New York City, which is 25 mile per hour.

4 MARGARET FORGIONE: And I just want to add that  
5 as Paul said earlier, the goal with all of these  
6 programs is not to have revenue and not to find  
7 people are committing the infractions. And we've  
8 also seen with red light camera the instances of  
9 running a red light go down about 73 percent after  
10 the camera is installed. So, it's showing that it's  
11 also an effective means.

12 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Well, I think you  
13 know one would argue I guess it could be an effective  
14 means because no one wants to get fined but the goal  
15 is supposed to be changing the behavior. But I want  
16 to make sure the agency is not outweighing changing  
17 the behavior for revenue. That's what I was trying  
18 to go but I'm going to pivot now just for a few more  
19 questions and then I'm going to yield to my  
20 colleagues. Brookville Boulevard, in the Executive  
21 plan there is \$1.4 million in federal funding added  
22 in Fiscal 2025, \$1.3 million in Fiscal 2026 and  
23 \$85,223 in Fiscal 2027 for the Brookville Boulevard  
24 Project. What does the scope of this funding relate  
25 to and also, has DOT conducted any other coastal

2 studies in the Rockaways and what were the results of  
3 those?

4 PAUL OCHOA: Yeah, thanks Council Member. The  
5 work is underway. I believe as of last time, they're  
6 still in the data collection phase. It's a planning  
7 grant, which is really good because it helps us think  
8 about options for what an implementation project  
9 could look like. This is an area with as you know  
10 very well, with a lot of flooding. So, the other  
11 good news I would say is the grant agreement was  
12 signed at the last Administration and we do not  
13 believe that this funding is in jeopardy in any way.

14 And again, the work is underway and hopefully  
15 will tell us what a future project could look like.  
16 The scale of the project, the scope of the project  
17 and what type of project would make sense in the  
18 future.

19 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: And has DOT conducted  
20 any other coastal studies in Rockaway or across the  
21 city?

22 PAUL OCHOA: Yeah, we do have uh - this is the  
23 largest resiliency planning work that we've  
24 undertaken. Usually we partner with EDC, for  
25 example, EDC is leading the Lower Manhattan

1 Resiliency Project. The East Side Coastal Resiliency  
2 Project. I don't see any East Side Coastal  
3 Resiliency People here but so it's - we are venturing  
4 into this. It's obviously a very important topic for  
5 us and a topic that impacts our assets, so.  
6 Hopefully we will do more in the future.  
7

8 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you for that.

9 MARGARET FORGIONE: Chair, just to follow up on  
10 the previous questions. We are actually going to be  
11 doing a public awareness campaign at the start of the  
12 expansion of the red light camera program very  
13 broadly, so that people are aware that it is  
14 expanding citywide.

15 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you for that.  
16 Bays Water Park pedestrian access. The Executive ten  
17 year capital commitment plan includes \$35.2 million  
18 in capital funding for the Bays Water Park Pedestrian  
19 Access Project primarily in Fiscal 2030. Why is the  
20 project so far out in the capital plan?

21 PAUL OCHOA: It's far out in the capital plan in  
22 part because of what I was explaining to Chair  
23 Brannan. We go through a stretch exercise at the  
24 time. The construction of the project, however, is  
25 not impacted. I believe the construction starting in

2 2028, we would move funding up as needed to make sure  
3 that the project timelines align with the capital  
4 project budget. Sometimes there's in an ideal world,  
5 everything would be aligned but we just want to make  
6 sure that the city's not bonding out for more money  
7 than what they need.

8 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you for that  
9 and it is my understanding that the design process  
10 was initiated a year ago. If that's the case, there  
11 will obviously be a significant gap with that window.  
12 So, you're saying that as needed -

13 PAUL OCHOA: It would move the funding up,  
14 correct.

15 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you for that.  
16 Tractor trailer overnight parking, on September 28,  
17 2023, the City Council passed Intro. 906A which  
18 requires the city to create off street parking for  
19 tractor trailers. The bill requires DOT, DCAS, and  
20 DCP to coordinate on creating off street commercial  
21 parking in at least three locations by December 31,  
22 2025. What off street commercial parking has DOT  
23 created due to the enactment of this legislation?

24 MARGARET FORGIONE: Okay, so Chair as you're  
25 aware we did begin our overnight truck parking pilot.

2 In March, we announced the three locations that we  
3 have. One in Brooklyn, one in the Bronx and one in  
4 Queens. Those are currently underway and we're  
5 seeing that the trucking industry is beginning to go  
6 these appropriate locations to park overnight. I  
7 don't know if you were referring to a municipal lot  
8 or like an off street parking.

9 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Yes, that's what I'm  
10 talking about.

11 MARGARET FORGIONE: Right, so we do not provide  
12 parking lots for trucks off street. We are  
13 collaborating very closely with EDC and other  
14 agencies finance and sheriff to discuss what options  
15 there are available to the trucking industry but  
16 we're very proud on the short run we've gotten these  
17 other three locations off the ground.

18 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: So, the three  
19 locations that you speak are on street parking but  
20 I'm talking about off street, which the law is  
21 calling on DOT, DCAS, and DCP to coordinate that and  
22 this needs to be created by the end of this year.  
23 So, what off street commercial parking has been  
24 created since its enactment, which was like almost  
25 two years ago now?

2 MARGARET FORGIONE: Right, yeah so we are - now  
3 that we've gotten the on street off the ground, we  
4 are looking more closely at the off street and we're  
5 starting by looking at any city owned properties  
6 around the city that we might be able to utilize for  
7 this.

8 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Can you please  
9 provide an update on the timeline for implementation  
10 and the steps DOT has taken in conjunction with the  
11 other city agencies so far?

12 MARGARET FORGIONE: So, we have been meeting with  
13 them carefully and frequently to start executing both  
14 the on street and the off street locations and we can  
15 get you a more detailed follow up to that.

16 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: How much funding does  
17 DOT estimate it would need to build municipal lots to  
18 alleviate overnight parking congestion and illegally  
19 parked trucks?

20 MARGARET FORGIONE: We don't have an estimate for  
21 you at this time.

22 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: I will say I'm  
23 concerned that you don't have an estimate for it  
24 considering that three locations are supposed to be  
25 established by the end of this year. We're going

2 into Fiscal 2026. We're in the executive budget  
3 right now and the agency does not have an answer. So  
4 it would be really good to get that quickly.

5 YDANIS RODRIGUEZ: Chair, sorry, on the building  
6 piece and you're talking about that the concern that  
7 the agency doesn't have the dollars to build a garage  
8 for truck right. Is that what your saying?

9 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: No I'm talking about  
10 the implementation of Intro. 906A that was passed by  
11 the Council in 2023.

12 YDANIS RODRIGUEZ: Okay, we have to get back to  
13 you on this.

14 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you. Tractor  
15 trailer parking overview really quickly.  
16 Approximately 90 percent of the city's goods are  
17 transported by truck. With the rise of ecommerce  
18 changing consumer behavior, has led to an increase in  
19 deliveries to homes and businesses resulting in a  
20 greater number of trucks on our roads. These trucks  
21 require parking spaces to efficiently deliver these  
22 goods to New Yorkers without impacting the  
23 surrounding communities. How has the landscape for  
24 trucking and deliveries changed since the pandemic?  
25 And uhm, we had passed legislation in terms of

2 redesigning the truck route and so, I'm curious to  
3 know how DOT is doing in that process in terms of  
4 accessing the truck routes and how DOT an implement  
5 better access areas.

6 YDANIS RODRIGUEZ: I'm going to start and then  
7 First Deputy Commissioner, she will add in.  
8 Definitely you know there's an increase of New  
9 Yorkers relying on those trucks to bring our  
10 deliveries. 85 percent of New Yorkers place an order  
11 once a week through Amazon, UPS and Fed Ex and 24  
12 percent of New Yorkers are placing the order four  
13 times a week. So, when we talk about all the trucks  
14 in the street, it's like delivery workers, that they  
15 go so fast. They go fast because they only have five  
16 minutes from the moment when they pick up their food  
17 to bring it to us.

18 So, when it comes to the truck, definitely you  
19 know we are looking at this and we have to take a  
20 number of initiatives. We're trying to incentivize  
21 overnight delivery. We also started a micro hub  
22 which is the first one that we did in the upper west  
23 side from central park west to Broadway from 86<sup>th</sup> to  
24 72<sup>nd</sup> Street that we are given the opportunity to the  
25 resident of that community to started planning from

1 blank on how they would like to use the street,  
2 including those trucks. We do the last mile which is  
3 a pilot project that also we are doing that is giving  
4 few location across the city that we're allowing  
5 those UPS, Fed Ex and others to go and use those  
6 trucks to those locations but from that location to  
7 the last mile, they must use a smallest vehicles,  
8 ideally electric assistant bike, and other way to  
9 deliver. We are also taking other measures when it  
10 came to have more signs that has put it clear where  
11 truck are not allowed in our city. But the First  
12 Deputy Commissioner will speak.

14 MARGARET FORGIONE: Thank you Commissioner. So  
15 two things. First after Local Law 168 of 2021, we  
16 have installed over 3,000 truck loading spaces  
17 citywide. This is a combination of commercial  
18 metered parking spaces, neighborhood loading zones  
19 and just unpaid truck loading zone spaces. And in  
20 response to your question about the truck network  
21 redesign, we will be publishing our report this  
22 spring, or I should say very shortly. From Local Law  
23 171 of 2023, we are finalizing the recommendations  
24 now after we've collected a lot of stakeholder  
25 feedback and held public sessions. We've looked at

2 land use patterns, delivery trends, what's been  
3 occurring in New York and even further field in the  
4 trucking industry over the last few years and as soon  
5 as we release this report, we're going to begin the  
6 rule changes, more outreach and then taking an  
7 additional feedback about any recommended changes in  
8 the truck route network.

9 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: No, thank you for  
10 that and I'm curious to know and we can talk off line  
11 about this, where those locations are. What that  
12 engagement looks like just to make sure that  
13 communities are not being overlooked. Thank you.  
14 Thank you Chair.

15 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay, we've been joined by  
16 Council Member Stevens and Farias and now we're going  
17 to start questions starting with Carr followed by  
18 Louis.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER CARR: Thank you Chair.  
20 Commissioner, always good to see you. I want to hone  
21 in on something that Chair Brannan was talking about  
22 earlier, which is the resurfacing budget for this  
23 coming fiscal year. A big advocate of trying to get  
24 us to 1,300 lanes miles and as you know, in the prior  
25 administration, that's where we were supposed to be

2 but for COVID and the cuts that had to happen at that  
3 time due the economic downturn.

4 So, given that we're still trying to play catchup  
5 from those Bloomberg years where the resurfacing  
6 budget was really well below par and that we were  
7 committed to doing 1,300 lane miles in the not too  
8 distant past. Can we try to get up to that goal  
9 point so we can really start to finish making up the  
10 ground that we lost quite literally in those 2009 to  
11 2013 years.

12 YDANIS RODRIGUEZ: Yes we can and I appreciate  
13 the Council you know commitment to also put the money  
14 and we definitely will need to have our you know  
15 internal conversation but I think you know that was a  
16 great goal that we had and definitely more than happy  
17 to continue conversation with the Council Members.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER CARR: That's great, I hope we can  
19 do that and I just know we have great confidence in  
20 our borough operations teams, particularly Staten  
21 Island and Brooklyn who I know if we get them the  
22 resources, we can get the job done. I want to talk a  
23 little bit more about resurfacing. In the past, DOT  
24 piloted rubberized asphalt in certain parts of the  
25 borough and other parts of the city and I think to

1  
2 great effect, it lasted longer. It was a lot less  
3 noisy, particularly on streets where we had a lot of  
4 bus pickups. What's the state of DOT's operations  
5 with respect to using that material?

6 MARGARET FORGIONE: We're still watching  
7 carefully how that area holds up over the long run.  
8 We're inspecting it several times a year to see what  
9 is happening. We are very interested in expanding  
10 good environmental programs such as that. We're also  
11 very much focused on increasing our percentage of  
12 RAP, which Recycled Asphalt Pavement in the mixes  
13 that we do produce ourselves. Right now we're at  
14 about 40 percent or upwards and we're looking to  
15 consistently start producing 50 percent recycled  
16 asphalt which of course is a great way to prevent us  
17 from purchasing brand new materials and also  
18 disposing of the milled surface once we take it out.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER CARR: Absolutely, listen, I'm a  
20 big supporter of increasing recycled asphalt where we  
21 can. It checks every box but as far as you know  
22 monitoring the Rubberized Asphalt pilot. What are  
23 you benchmarks moving forward? At what point do you  
24 say this works, this didn't and we want to do more.

2 MARGARET FORGIONE: Right, we're not quite there  
3 yet but maybe what we can offer for you is a meeting  
4 and tell you what we have seen so far and we still  
5 want to watch it a bit longer before we start to make  
6 plans to take it out more widely.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER CARR: Okay and my last question  
8 is about you know coordinating with the utility  
9 companies emergency cuts. You know I know our  
10 borough teams do their best to work with the Con Ed  
11 and others to make sure that we're not cutting into  
12 our protected roads and sometimes those best efforts  
13 you know fail because the utility companies you know  
14 don't take advantage of the great lead time they have  
15 between milling and paving. Do you tracking  
16 internally you know the number of utility cuts that  
17 are being applied for on an emergency basis now as  
18 compared to prior fiscal years? Are we seeing  
19 improvements on the grander scale?

20 MARGARET FORGIONE: Listen, we agree with you and  
21 we are all over that. We hate nothing more than one  
22 of our beautiful new streets being cut into  
23 unnecessarily. So, we continue all of the efforts  
24 that we've done in terms of calling in utility  
25 companies if we see that there's a problem with them.

2 Meeting with them monthly so we're very clear on the  
3 upcoming work and anytime they apply for a permit, if  
4 it's an emergency permit or not, we scrutinize that  
5 to make sure that that work is not done within the  
6 protection window.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER CARR: I appreciate it. I know  
8 the department is doing all it can. I think we just  
9 have to force our friends on the other side to do a  
10 little bit better on their side. Thank you Chairs.

11 YDANIS RODRIGUEZ: As you asked the question and  
12 made the comment, I think that this is one of the  
13 things that I always say that I loved more to be from  
14 the Council, to be in the agency, asking the question  
15 and to be inside the entity and to be able to make  
16 decision. As you say it from milling to paving, we  
17 had to leave the space for those utility company, Con  
18 Ed, Verizon, you know those who bring - any utility  
19 services that we New Yorkers use. You know most of  
20 the things are happening underground, so DOT had to  
21 coordinate with those utility companies, say let's go  
22 the milling now but let's leave the street open for  
23 them to do some work so that they don't have to come  
24 back and cut the street. So, it's a lot of  
25 coordination. I want to acknowledge also when I come

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4 to this hearing, in all my time, I always come with  
5 my Borough Commissioner, so here have Rosanne. You  
6 know and also Jennifer from Manhattan and Antonio  
7 from the Bronx and also Niko from Queens. So, the  
8 reason why I want them always to be in the room and  
9 Kate, I'm sorry from Brooklyn. Sorry Kate, I love  
10 you too.

11 Is because I know that the Council Member, the  
12 other one that had [01:20:25] in the community. So,  
13 as we ask broader question for citywide about  
14 anything that is local, it is our borough  
15 commissioners and their team and that are the  
16 immediate connection besides that you all have access  
17 to all of us.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER CARR: I know we have great  
19 relationships with the Borough Commissioners, Borough  
20 Commissioner Caruana and Bray are amazing to work  
21 with, really grateful to have them and I'm sure their  
22 counterparts and our other assistant boroughs are as  
23 well. Thank you.

24 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay, we've also been  
25 joined by Council Member Banks. Now, we have  
26 questions from Council Member Louis followed by  
27 Ayala.

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1  
2 COUNCIL MEMBER LOUIS: Thank you Chairs. Good to  
3 see you Commissioner and thank you for deploying  
4 Borough Commissioner Bray to our municipal town hall  
5 meeting last week. I have three quick questions.  
6 I'll just ask them all and you guys could respond.  
7 How will the new funding in anticipated state CHIPS  
8 grant funding be used? Solely for large scale  
9 capital projects or will it also support the  
10 persistent backlog of smaller traffic control  
11 requests such as stop signs, speed bumps and  
12 pedestrian safety measures? Can DOT provide a  
13 timeline or a strategy on how this budget will  
14 improve the turnaround for traffic studies  
15 particularly in communities like mine to a response  
16 delays are measured in years? And the last one is in  
17 regards to a mother and son that were here hit by a  
18 speeding school bus in my district in early April. I  
19 wanted to know what are the current parameters of the  
20 CHIPS grant in relation to school safety such as  
21 traffic calming and signal installations?

22 PAUL OCHOA: Hey Council Member, good to see you  
23 always.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER LOUIS: Hey Paul.  
25

1  
2 PAUL OCHOA: We love CHIPS. CHIPS is the  
3 Consolidated Local Street and Highway Improvement  
4 Program. We use it both on the capital budget and on  
5 the expense side, depending on the type of contract.  
6 CHIPS has very specific requirements on what it can  
7 be used for. It's a lot of traffic signals. You hit  
8 it right on the head. We do not use it for speed  
9 bumps but we do program it in all areas of the  
10 budget. In particular traffic operations. We did  
11 program more CHIPS funding into the budget. We do  
12 that on a yearly basis to make sure that one, the  
13 projects and the programs that are CHIPS funded, have  
14 enough resources in them to continue. We also, we do  
15 program CHIPS, CHIPS is actually pretty flexible.  
16 You program it both on the PS side and on the DOTPS  
17 side and we work with OMB to make sure that we have  
18 enough CHIPS funding on any given year.

19 Your point about the speeding school, we do from  
20 time to time, we do add CHIPS funding to our school  
21 safety team. They do that, both on the capital side  
22 and on the expense side. If you have a specific ask,  
23 I'm happy to track that down.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER FARIAS: We have a specific ask  
3 that we can talk about after and just in regards to  
4 the others.

5 PAUL OCHOA: Yeah, and then same with the traffic  
6 studies, listen, we understand the frustration at  
7 times. It is not something that we can just look at  
8 and determine. There is times of the day that need  
9 to be considered. There's a long period of time.  
10 There's seasonality so we do understand that  
11 sometimes its frustrating that traffic studies are  
12 not done as fast as everyone here would like them but  
13 they do, I just want to acknowledge, it takes a long  
14 time to actually get the data right to make sure that  
15 we're not just installing something because somebody  
16 is asking for it but we're installing measures that  
17 are actually needed.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER FARIAS: But how will we make it  
19 different in the next fiscal year?

20 PAUL OCHOA: I think we can increase in contract  
21 or capacity is a good example. I'm happy to either  
22 set something up with our traffic operations or look  
23 at increase contract capacity for us to have more  
24 people doing more studies is probably the fastest way  
25

possible. An individual study will probably not be  
sped up but having more people do them -

COUNCIL MEMBER FARIAS: It's a broadband, yeah.

PAUL OCHOA: Exactly, having more people do them  
should have a good result.

COUNCIL MEMBER FARIAS: Alright thank you. Thank  
you Chairs.

COUNCIL MEMBER AYALA: Thank you. My question is  
actually I'm not sure that I'm asking the correct  
agency but I'm assuming that there - I'm hoping that  
there was some coordination here. Can you tell us if  
you've had any conversations with the NYPD regarding  
their new policy on legally charging bicyclists with  
criminal summonses for running lights, disobeying  
signs and/or riding the wrong way on the bike lane?

YDANIS RODRIGUEZ: We work closely, the Chief of  
Transportation at the NYPD. We have joined  
coordination between our Education Department at DOT  
and their entity, once and awhile we go out do  
education work. One of the campaigns that we did was  
it's called gets smart before you start and that  
campaign is educating those who use e-bike, how to  
maneuver the e-bike because in 2023, we lost 30  
cyclists and 23 of them, they were using e-bike,

1  
2 about 7 of them, they die not because they were hit  
3 by a vehicle but they fall in the street. So, we do  
4 campaign when it came to the educational piece. We  
5 know that it doesn't matter where we go. A lot of  
6 people are asking the question on what I would do  
7 with those who are using e-bike. That they are so  
8 far that they're in the sidewalk. Definitely we  
9 coordinated a lot when it came to the educational  
10 piece. The part related to enforcement is on the  
11 NYPD.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER AYALA: Absolutely but I mean I  
13 just - what you said you mentioned that 37  
14 individuals, uh there was 37 fatal incidents last  
15 year.

16 YDANIS RODRIGUEZ: 23, yeah we lost 30 cyclists  
17 die in our street but 23 of them, they were using e-  
18 bike and from those 23, 7 of them, they were not hit  
19 by no vehicle, they lost control and what we started,  
20 it took us for us to you know invest on educating  
21 both. One, those are using e-bike on how they had to  
22 before they started using the bike but at the same  
23 time, in the same car, we also have a piece educating  
24 those who are using e-bike and look for pedestrians  
25 and it's not legal to ride a bike in the sidewalk

2 unless it's a child. So, we do a lot of education or  
3 component with the NYPD but the part related to the  
4 enforcement is on the NYPD side.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER AYALA: So, they don't necessarily  
6 - I'm sure they're not asking for your permission but  
7 can you tell us what the number of traffic fatalities  
8 was in 2023?

9 YDANIS RODRIGUEZ: Overall, we have it here, give  
10 us a second. Give us a second, we have it here.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER AYALA: Uh huh.

12 YDANIS RODRIGUEZ: Definitely the thing to look  
13 for, the numbers, most traffic fatalities as Mayor  
14 Adams has established is another type of violence and  
15 we've been taking that approach. What we know is  
16 that most the fatality, the traffic fatality that we  
17 have is most produced by people who drive cars or  
18 trucks, no cyclists. So, we recognize that.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER AYALA: Hmm, hmm, yes.

20 YDANIS RODRIGUEZ: But we also recognize it  
21 doesn't matter the town hall happening in Washington,  
22 Upper West Side, Upper East Side, Brooklyn, there's  
23 going to be apartments and people saying what are you  
24 doing with those small percentage but those reckless  
25 cyclists were using e-bike, who are on the sidewalk.

2 So, definitely we know that we have to tackle this  
3 issue and from the education or to the enforcement,  
4 is a job that must be done. As Mayor Adams has said,  
5 everyone must play by the rule. We want drivers and  
6 those who are behind the wheel of trucks and cars to  
7 look for pedestrians and cyclists but we also want  
8 those who are using e-bike to look for pedestrians  
9 and not to use the e-bike in the sidewalk.

10 MARGARET FORGIONE: So, in 2023, there was a  
11 total of 267 fatalities. In 2024, it was 252.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER AYALA: Which is significantly  
13 higher than those that occurred because of a  
14 bicyclist right? And so, my point is, I feel there  
15 has to be some level of parity. I'm not saying that  
16 folks shouldn't drive responsibly whether they're  
17 driving a bike or they're using an e-bike, whether  
18 they're you know traveling by vehicle, but the idea  
19 of criminalizing bicyclists in this way is  
20 unprecedented and it makes absolutely no sense and  
21 these are the drivers, if I'm driving and I run the  
22 light, I'm going to get a ticket, I'm going to get a  
23 summons. Criminalizing has a different you know  
24 consequence, right? Specifically because most e-bike  
25 drivers are migrants that are driving you know to and

2 from work, right? They're making deliveries and in  
3 this climate, we know that you know folks that are  
4 being charged with you know misdemeanors are being  
5 deported because of that. And so, I'm just greatly  
6 concerned about the impact that this new rule will  
7 have and you know hoping that you know maybe there  
8 could be some suggestions made right by your office  
9 to the NYPD and better coordination to try to figure  
10 out alternative routes towards enforcement that don't  
11 lead to criminalizing folks in this way.

12 YDANIS RODRIGUEZ: Yeah, as an immigrant myself,  
13 that my second job was doing sandwiches at 55 Water  
14 Street from way after putting myself through college  
15 and being an activist and then being a teacher for 15  
16 years and a Council Member for 12, now Commissioner  
17 for 4 years, I've always been a voice for immigrants  
18 in our city. At the same time we also want to you  
19 know understand how important it is for anyone we are  
20 using our street in any motor transportation, please  
21 look for pedestrians especially children and senior  
22 citizens as you family members. I think that you  
23 know I was with Gale Brewer on the upper west side in  
24 a town hall meeting with the mayor and I was  
25 surprised to hear so many people from the upper west

2 side talking about how some people using e-bike, they  
3 are out of control. So, we all know we hear that in  
4 our offices, so definitely we had to address it and  
5 that's why our campaign on Get Smart Before You  
6 Start. One is looking for those who are using e-bike  
7 to continue using it but also understanding that they  
8 had to look for pedestrians. That it's not legal to  
9 ride a bike in the sidewalk but more than happy to  
10 continue conversation with the NYPD but again, we do  
11 most of the work with the educational piece when it  
12 came to the enforcement, the NYPD lead that effort.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER AYALA: Yeah, so does the  
14 education component now include this new rule?

15 YDANIS RODRIGUEZ: Well, the education, we  
16 partner with NYPD especially the Chief of  
17 Transportation when it comes to being in the field.  
18 We're going to be some intersection with higher  
19 numbers of crashes and educating those drivers but  
20 also New Yorkers who use e-bike. You know those  
21 delivery workers; they are essential workers. They  
22 do a good job. We work with them very soon. You  
23 know our micro-mobility office.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER AYALA: Yeah, I just want to know  
25 is the new rules going to included in whatever

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2 training material DOT is using you know to better  
3 inform bicyclists? Is that a yes or is that a no?

4 YDANIS RODRIGUEZ: [INAUDIBLE 01:32:40]

5 COUNCIL MEMBER AYALA: Is your mic on  
6 Commissioner?

7 YDANIS RODRIGUEZ: Yeah, biweekly checking  
8 between New York City, DOT, NYPD. Our job is to be  
9 sure that everyone is safe.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER AYALA: I get that and I want to  
11 be safe. I've almost, you know I've been in the you  
12 know looking on one way and a bicyclist you know is  
13 coming the other way almost hit me a couple of times.  
14 So, I understand the need to hold people responsible.  
15 I'm not disputing that. I think that there has to be  
16 a consequence to every action. What I'm saying that  
17 it is not pairable with what we're doing with  
18 drivers, right? You get a summons for driving and  
19 hitting somebody you know if for whatever reason but  
20 then you get a misdemeanor for riding a bike the  
21 wrong way, it does not seem fair and at least you  
22 know at minimum we should be alerting bicyclists and  
23 working with groups that work with e-bike drivers so  
24 that they understand what the new policy is and the  
25 serious implications of being charged with a

1  
2 misdemeanor this day and age. That's all I'm saying  
3 and with that I have no more questions.

4 YDANIS RODRIGUEZ: Thanks.

5 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: We've also been joined by  
6 Council Members Ossè and Hanks and now we have  
7 questions from Restler followed by De La Rosa.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Great, sorry that is my  
9 name. Thank you Council Member Stevens, I appreciate  
10 it. Commissioner and team, good to see you all. A  
11 few questions I just about, first is Bedford Avenue  
12 bike lane. This is a project that primarily in  
13 Council Member Ossè's district, one that I've  
14 supported. We've continued to have a series of  
15 incidents of young children getting struck in the  
16 bike lane and your team has graciously come out with  
17 me to visit the bike lane and make tweaks and  
18 adjustments over the last several months but we had  
19 another scary incident this weekend where a four or  
20 five year old, six year old kid was struck by a  
21 cyclist and wanted to just see if there's any further  
22 safety improvements that the DOT team is considering  
23 for how we can try to kind of meet the needs of that  
24 specific community. These are large families. We  
25 don't have protected bike lanes in that community, so

2 there's been some learning curve. I think we all  
3 know that when protected bike lanes are installed, it  
4 makes streets safer for drivers, cyclists,  
5 pedestrians, but we clearly need to do more in this  
6 community to make a difference. Do you have any  
7 suggestions or we've offered some recommendations to  
8 DOT? Any updates on ways that we can try to make  
9 that stretch of Bedford Avenue safer for everybody?

10 YDANIS RODRIGUEZ: First Deputy Commissioner who  
11 oversee all operation including the planning division  
12 led by Eric Beaton to answer the question.

13 MARGARET FORGIONE: Thank you for the question  
14 Council Member. We have been looking carefully at  
15 Bedford Avenue. We've been out there a bunch of  
16 times. We are looking to inform you and others about  
17 some measures that we're going to be installing to  
18 improve the safety there. In particular, make sure  
19 that cyclists are very much aware of people crossing  
20 and cyclists are proceeding at a very slow speed.  
21 So, that can include more sort of like rumble strips  
22 that kind of wake up and slow down cyclists as well  
23 as an increase in signage. So, those are some of the  
24 main things we're planning right now and if you have  
25

2 others, I'm happy to hear from you as well about what  
3 your measures, your recommended measures -

4 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Yeah, look I think that  
5 you know we gave all of that feedback from the  
6 beginning and I think DOT incorporated a number of  
7 those designs into the original implementation or  
8 installation of the bike lane. You know folks, some  
9 folks in the community have suggested that during the  
10 period of time when the youngest children are picked  
11 up and dropped off by school buses, could there be  
12 temporary reprieve where we have school buses pulling  
13 in more fully to the curb or you know discontinuing  
14 the bicycle lane for that period of time each day to  
15 accommodate the school buses? Is that something that  
16 DOT is considering?

17 MARGARET FORGIONE: I don't think we would favor  
18 the inconsistency of a bike lane where cyclists can  
19 arrive at any given time and it may be open or it may  
20 be closed. I think that would create a lot of  
21 additional issues.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Okay, we look forward to  
23 continuing to work together on that. I think that  
24 the current conditions need to be addressed and so we  
25

2 want to continue to work together to try and improve  
3 safety there.

4 I continue to support the bike lane. I want this  
5 to work but I think we need more proactive  
6 partnership from DOT you know as we unfortunately  
7 continue to have safety issues and did you all see  
8 the video from this pass weekend of the kid being  
9 struck?

10 MARAGARET FORGIONE: Yes.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Okay, so you understand  
12 just how pressing an issue this is, yes?

13 MARGARET FORGIONE: We're working on it Council  
14 Member.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Okay, I also just wanted  
16 to shift to open streets. Uhm, I'm concerned about  
17 the lack of dedicated funding for open streets. Does  
18 DOT have adequate funding to maintain open streets at  
19 the levels that we have in recent years?

20 YDANIS RODRIGUEZ: We appreciate that Mayor  
21 baseline, our funding, our baseline that he put the  
22 money for our open street for this year. As I read  
23 in my opening statement, everything that we have in  
24 2023, 2024, and 2025 came with money from COVID and  
25 that's how we cannot compare like the numbers - what

1  
2 was open street during COVID. Open street was places  
3 that New York City went and put some barricade so  
4 that people could walk with distance. It was in 2022  
5 that we decided to built permanent open street. We  
6 built 217 open streets. The 217 open street, there  
7 were 217 locations that open street have partnership  
8 with not-for-profit business improvement district and  
9 we were able to put the money on to \$20,000 for  
10 activation in those location, especially underserved  
11 community that they didn't have the money.

12 It was last year we continuing increasing from  
13 217 to 224 and last year to 237 open streets.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: But my understanding  
15 Commissioner is that this year, we're at 127. That's  
16 a 45 percent decrease. Is that number accurate?  
17 That we're at 127 open streets for this year. We did  
18 reach 232 in 2024 but that we seen a significant  
19 decline. Do I have those numbers correct?

20 YDANIS RODRIGUEZ: It's not correct. What we  
21 shared was how many open streets we have so far  
22 because application continue being open and starting  
23 in March. So, what is the open street? Any block  
24 that a group of residents. We partnership with a  
25 not-for-profit or a business improvement district,

2 they can start running together. That is an open  
3 street, they can activate two days in a year. That  
4 can be two days in a year -

5 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Commissioner, just  
6 because I'm out of time, I'm sorry. If you're down -  
7 if my numbers are inaccurate and you're not at 127  
8 this year, do we have a number for what we are at?

9 YDANIS RODRIGUEZ: I can do one thing. My  
10 commitment as a Commissioner is to always overpass my  
11 previous numbers and I will be ending this year; if  
12 we did 237 last year, I can tell you that I will not  
13 -

14 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Okay, I'm happy to hear  
15 that. I think we have more open streets in District  
16 33 than any other Council District in the city or  
17 just as many. Keith can correct me but we're very  
18 proud to support all of the open streets. We have  
19 across Washington Street, Hoyte and many many others,  
20 Monique, Berry and we've appreciated DOT partnership  
21 but I'm concerned that \$2.1 million, is that fully -  
22 that \$2.1 million is fully for open streets? Just a  
23 yes, no.

24 YDANIS RODRIGUEZ: Yeah, the answer is yes.  
25

2 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: That's fully for open  
3 streets? And you're confident that that's adequate  
4 funding to ensure dynamic programming and maintenance  
5 of what you're committing will be over 230 open  
6 streets? That is an adequate allocation of  
7 resources?

8 YDANIS RODRIGUEZ: Look, I - more always means  
9 better for me and as I said, none of the 237 open  
10 street that we had last year require for DOT to put  
11 money on them. We prioritize those communities that  
12 there's a not-for-profit or a BID who is a partner.  
13 So, definitely any way or how as I will be sitting  
14 there, that the Council would like to put more money  
15 for the open street, I would welcome those additional  
16 resources.

17 PAUL OCHOA: Council Member, let me just correct,  
18 the \$2.1 million is not the total budget, it is just  
19 the additional money that we got for Corona Virus  
20 that was expiring. We have more funding as part of  
21 our normal budget that was funded with city tax  
22 dollars.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: What is the allocation  
24 of funding for open streets this year?

2 PAUL OCHOA: There's different buckets, I'm happy  
3 to give you a briefing but we have an equity program  
4 where we help underserved open streets partners.  
5 That's the partnership we have with hoard; I believe  
6 I'm not sure if it was actually your district but the  
7 hoard is all over the city.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Yeah, they're in ours  
9 too and do you think there's adequate funding for  
10 Open Streets programming and maintenance?

11 PAUL OCHOA: Correct, we have enough funding for  
12 us to continue this season. I think you pointed out  
13 that it is not baselined. It is something that we  
14 will continue conversations with City Hall and OMB.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Okay, I would appreciate  
16 if you all can circle back with us just to understand  
17 what is allocated in total because there's been a lot  
18 of confusion and if you all think you have enough  
19 resources, that's good to hear. We really value the  
20 program and the maintenance support that DOT has  
21 provided. Your team has done a great job. I really  
22 want to recognize them but they can't do without  
23 resources and if we need to have that conversation,  
24 we just want to have it honestly and push to make  
25

2 sure that we can continue to have great open streets  
3 moving forward. Thank you very much.

4 PAUL OCHOA: And just that number does include  
5 Trick or Street, which is not out yet so we'll expect  
6 a big chunk of those open streets to be for Trick or  
7 Streets.

8 YDANIS RODRIGUEZ: And I would like for this to  
9 be one of the legacy that during our time at the  
10 Council, away from the Administration, we live for  
11 the future generation. I believe that the open  
12 street again, as you can see some of the spaces - I'm  
13 more than happy to send it to you. I don't think  
14 that there's one there of the Open Street but we all  
15 should know that one of the first like Open Street  
16 was a pedestrian plaza in Time Square that used to be  
17 a storage for car and became a [INAUDIBLE 01:43:16]  
18 with 44,000 people like in '23. So definitely, I'm  
19 very proud. You know one of the things that I know  
20 the sources of funding that we have for the Open  
21 Street is with the Horticulture society. Is that the  
22 name? The Horticulture Society, which is a contract  
23 that we gave them \$27 million. That money is secure,  
24 so with that \$27 million and for the first time, that  
25 Horticulture must have 32 percent of MWBE and we are

2 able to get the Horticulture Society, which is in the  
3 institution that they put the plans. They work with  
4 the beautification. So, this addition of money is  
5 more for the activation when it came to the funding  
6 but any way or how we all can work together to leave  
7 the Open Street solid in a good place for the future  
8 generation, I think it's a great investment for our  
9 children.

10 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay, we have questions now  
11 from De La Rosa followed by Narcisse.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER DE LA ROSA: Thank you Chairs and  
13 thank you Commissioner and team for being here. My  
14 question is around the vacancies at the agency, 630  
15 vacancies. What are the challenges for filling those  
16 vacancies at this time? Is DOT subject to the two  
17 for one hire policy that was instituted across the  
18 board?

19 YDANIS RODRIGUEZ: Yeah, the numbers of vacancies  
20 that we have is equal, similar to the pre-pandemic.  
21 There's always going to be challenges with the  
22 vacancy. We work hard and we appreciate at the  
23 Chairman of labor that also you work to be sure that  
24 the unions also and through DCAS, we've been holding  
25 that fear. We have a great plan. First of all, when

1 I was a - immediately as I became a Commissioner, I  
2 asked the agency, do we have a memoranda or  
3 understand or agreement between DOT and the school  
4 engineer that graduated larger numbers of Black  
5 engineer in the nation which is City College? The  
6 answer was no. We have some level of going to the  
7 job fair. You know doing some participation but  
8 under our time, we sign a memoranda agreement that  
9 now we work with City College and we not only work  
10 with the students from City College but we - all the  
11 students close to 300 students from college doing  
12 internship at DOT. So, we had a good plan for  
13 recruiting. We used our resources around colleges  
14 and around common work at DOT. We had a lot of work  
15 at DOT. Margaret started as an intern and she moved  
16 from there to be the Manhattan Borough Commissioner  
17 to be in charge of operation and now she run the six  
18 operation at DOT. So, one is recruiting through DOT,  
19 creating pipeline and you know and increasing the  
20 salary. Like, you know the Staten Island Ferry is a  
21 typical example. Like those workers they were there  
22 with contracts for almost four years. And it was  
23 under the Mayor Adams Administration that we signed a  
24 new contract, so we were very close on recruiting.  
25

1  
2 COUNCIL MEMBER DE LA ROSA: So, what is the main  
3 challenge for the vacancy and are you subject to the  
4 two for one hire policy?

5 PAUL OCHOA: Yeah, thanks for that question  
6 Council Member and we really appreciate the Council  
7 making sure that we have the right levels of  
8 staffing. We are subject to the two for one hiring  
9 on non-engineering positions. I think right before  
10 our Preliminary Budget, we came to an agreement with  
11 City Hall and OMB that engineering positions would  
12 not be subject to the hiring freezes. This is  
13 obviously very important. It's those engineer  
14 positions, those planner positions that are harder to  
15 recruit. This is not just a DOT issue. It's a  
16 citywide, nationwide issue.

17 Our field staff is fully staffed. It's sort of  
18 our planning division. I mentioned engineers that  
19 are harder to recruit. The Commissioner mentioned  
20 all the good initiatives we're doing to try to fill  
21 those positions but there is a shortage of all types  
22 of engineers in the nation, so hopefully we'll get  
23 more and more graduates to come and join our ranks.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER DE LA ROSA: Thank you Chair. I  
25 have one more question. In terms of Open Streets, so

2 in my district, a number of open streets have become  
3 plaza's and there's always drama around the plaza's.  
4 We've requested a meeting to talk about this further  
5 offline. I'm happy to take that conversation there  
6 but I wanted to ask you, of the 237 Open Streets, how  
7 many across the city have become plazas and then the  
8 question that we often get is what is the funding  
9 levels available to operators of plazas to make sure  
10 that once they become the plaza, there is maintenance  
11 and upkeep.

12 YDANIS RODRIGUEZ: Yeah, we can get back to you  
13 with that number. As I say the horticulture society  
14 is an institution that first of all they want a  
15 request for proposal like two years ago and in that  
16 proposal they were awarded \$27 million on the  
17 maintenance and the beautification when we saw the  
18 plaza. We both are close to the plaza and we have  
19 seen all those plans. So, those plans being brought  
20 in maintenance by the horticulture society. The 166  
21 new open street, also they are the ones who are  
22 bringing in the planting and helping the plaza team,  
23 Kyle and Emily and Cindy and others on the  
24 activation. So, that's when it comes to you know the  
25 starting with the Open Street. The ideal thing is

1 the plaza is self-maintained. The idea is that the  
2 plaza it have a partnership with a not-for-profit  
3 that is able to raise revenue and be able to take  
4 care but however time in square plaza is not a thing  
5 as a plaza in the Bronx or some places in Harlem in  
6 other underserved communities that there's not the  
7 same revenue generated. So, I think that you know we  
8 work hard but ideally under this Administration  
9 again, I don't - I can get back to you with the  
10 number but I know that Plaza and I believe there was  
11 I believe two other plazas open street that already  
12 received the money from Mayor Adams in order for us  
13 to start turning those Open Streets as a permanent  
14 plaza with capital dollars being assigned.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER DE LA ROSA: Okay, I look forward  
17 to talking offline. I know we sent the median  
18 request; I would appreciate it because there are some  
19 challenges and then also an update on the 191<sup>st</sup>  
20 Street Tunnel capital project but we can do that  
21 offline.

22 YDANIS RODRIGUEZ: Margaret can add it to the  
23 191<sup>st</sup> because there's capital and we do have it here  
24 when the construction will start happening.

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2 MARGARET FORGIONE: Yeah, we have I believe it's  
3 \$30 million allocated to the 191<sup>st</sup> Street tunnel and  
4 I need to get you the exact construction start but it  
5 is soon. Thank you.

6 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay, Council Member  
7 Narcisse followed by Banks.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: Thank you Chairs and  
9 thank you Commissioner and your team has been great  
10 with us but we have some question here that I want to  
11 iron out. Many streets in my district, especially in  
12 Garrison Beach, remain in poor condition despite  
13 recent infrastructure work. Residents regularly  
14 raise safety concern about deteriorating pavement and  
15 the lack of timely resurfacing. Given the \$40  
16 million funding gap for resurfacing citywide, how  
17 does DOT plan to prioritize neighborhoods like mine,  
18 Garrison Beach, Canarsie in the flatlands area that  
19 are still experiencing major street quality issues.  
20 That's one. What is the timeline and criteria for  
21 addressing resurfacing needs in areas that have  
22 already undergone capital upgrades but still face  
23 persistent problems? My time is limited so I'm going  
24 to ask a lot of questions.

2 Sidewalks, the executive plan includes addition  
3 state funding, \$2.6 million in fiscal 2025 and \$1.5  
4 million baseline starting in fiscal 2026 for course  
5 escalation related to the sidewalk inspection and  
6 management program. What will this additional  
7 funding support? How was the funding amount  
8 determined? What are the current course of the  
9 materials to maintain sidewalks? Have they increased  
10 significantly in the past few years? And if so, what  
11 is the new course and why? I know there's a lot of  
12 questions.

13 MARGARET FORGIONE: Thank you Council Member.  
14 So, responding to the paving questions. If you have  
15 any streets in your district and it goes for all the  
16 Council that you are concerned about, that we have  
17 not already informed you are planned in our upcoming  
18 paving program. If you let us know, we'll inspect  
19 them right away and we'll let you know if we believe  
20 that they meet criteria for paving and when we can  
21 get them paved.

22 So, as you all know, we have an allocation per  
23 community board. We very carefully fairly allocate  
24 the miles based on the number of lane miles in a  
25 community board and we make sure we're rotating

2 throughout the year so that every year, every  
3 community board gets something.

4 So, we would like to sit down with you and go  
5 through any streets you have of concern and then talk  
6 about the bigger board and what it is that we have  
7 planned but we will make sure we get that done.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: I appreciate that.

9 MARGARET FORGIONE: And then if you get us more  
10 specifics about a location where capital, if I  
11 understand correctly, capital work okay has taken  
12 place, however, there still are issues, maybe it's  
13 ponding or something else of that nature. So, we'd  
14 like to talk with you more about that and understand  
15 with our partners at DDC if something was not done  
16 exactly correctly and if there's an opportunity to  
17 have that corrected.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: And on that note, a lot  
19 of the street pavement or resurfacing done and very  
20 quickly a few probably months later, the water is not  
21 channeling to the catch basin and you have a lot of  
22 water puddles. What's going on with the engineering  
23 factor? How you puddle things based on the height  
24 and the level?

1  
2 MARGARET FORGIONE: Correct, right, so every time  
3 we resurface a street, we are mindful of how to make  
4 sure water gets to the curb and then funnels its way  
5 to the catch basin. If there's any location that's a  
6 problem, there are ways that we can try to rectify  
7 that. So, please let us know what those locations  
8 are.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: Thank you and the  
10 Capital Budget sidewalks. The sidewalks?

11 PAUL OCHOA: Yeah, I'm happy to talk about the  
12 sidewalks. The \$4.7 million that we got was just to  
13 cover the higher cost of steel and concrete to  
14 maintain the same level of operations. So, we buy  
15 concrete and steel every year. This year it came in  
16 higher than what we were budgeted for. So, we worked  
17 with OMB and the Administration to make sure that we  
18 had just a shortfall to keep at the same levels this  
19 last year.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: And how was that  
21 determined you said again?

22 PAUL OCHOA: So, it's just the difference in  
23 price from last year.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: Difference in price.

25 PAUL OCHOA: Hmm, hmm.

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2 COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: Okay, alright, thank  
3 you Chairs.

4 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay questions from Council  
5 Member Banks followed by Stevens and we've been  
6 joined by Council Member Brewer.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER BANKS: Thank you Chair and thank  
8 you Commissioner and to your staff. First of all, I  
9 just want to talk about a featured piece in News 12,  
10 this is pertaining to the Junior Street Bridge and  
11 the dilapidation of the cleanliness of the bridge.  
12 We've got multiple 311 complaints about this  
13 particular bridge that was unkept by DOT for close to  
14 three to four to five months, these tickets going  
15 back and I want to know after we actually did some  
16 advocacy, the bridge was cleaned up. So we want to  
17 thank you for cleaning up that bridge but I want to  
18 know exactly, it clearly states that DOT is  
19 responsible for maintaining and cleaning that bridge.  
20 I want to know is it a funding issue as to why  
21 there's no consistency in the cleaning of that bridge  
22 when that particular bridge is a major transportation  
23 route for the residents that live in Brownsville and  
24 East New York to get on the L-Train?

2 YDANIS RODRIGUEZ: Let me get back to you with  
3 the details but as I said before, from the \$34  
4 billion capital for ten years that we have, \$17  
5 billion are for our bridges to keep them in the state  
6 of good repair but let me get back to you.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER BANKS: This is a more pointed  
8 question, why has it taken so long to keep a  
9 consistent schedule of cleaning that bridge?

10 YDANIS RODRIGUEZ: Yeah, let me get back to you  
11 with the specific because I don't have the answer  
12 with me right now, so I will get it from my team.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER BANKS: Well, I don't see why wont  
14 you have the answer for that. I mean you cleaned the  
15 bridge after we made it public and we did provide the  
16 advocacy. I'm not understanding why we don't have  
17 the details at least on the particular bridge. You  
18 know as far as the maintenance and the cleaning and  
19 those scheduling - the schedules to keep that  
20 particular bridge clean.

21 YDANIS RODRIGUEZ: Yea, so we are very proud how  
22 we keep our bridges safe in maintenance and in a  
23 state of good repair. To that particular question  
24 with that bridge. I need to get back to you because  
25 I don't have the information.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER BANKS: Okay, so we'll wait for  
3 that detailed information and hopefully can provide  
4 some - the funding dollar amount it takes to maintain  
5 these particular bridges. As far as the overnight  
6 truck parking, there's been some concerns that has  
7 been raised by Community Board 5 as far as the input  
8 from the residents. You probably received a letter  
9 from the Chair. I just want to let you know I stand  
10 with the Community Board even though we do support it  
11 but we just want to make sure that there's in put  
12 across even a Community Board as to you know the  
13 metrics of it and how our community is benefit from  
14 that.

15 Also to we want to thank ACE. ACE did an amazing  
16 job with cleaning the particular bridge after you had  
17 came out the day before, so we definitely want to  
18 thank them for that. Now, the \$4.7 million that was  
19 given or has been allocated for the Van Sinderen  
20 Avenue Street Scape Project. I want to just  
21 basically commend you and thank you for that but also  
22 too, what needs to be taken into consideration is  
23 further south along the L-Train. It's dilapidated,  
24 the roads were dilapidated, straight all the way down  
25 from Atlantic all they way down going south to Linden

2 Boulevard where it cuts off or even goes a little  
3 further. So, if we can get some attention paid  
4 there, we would definitely appreciate that because  
5 that's a heavy traveled route for folks who get on  
6 the L-Train who cross Linden Boulevard and even go  
7 further northern to the district. Thank you much.

8 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: And now we have questions  
9 from Stevens followed by Salaam.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: Hello, uhm good morning  
11 or good afternoon or something. How are you guys  
12 doing today? I just wanted to ask a quick question  
13 regarding, what's the budget for the maintenance,  
14 maintaining streets in the city? Like, do you guys  
15 have a budget allocation for that?

16 MARGARET FORGIONE: Yes, we would need to get  
17 back with that specific number. We don't have that  
18 with us.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: This is a budget  
20 hearing, correct?

21 MARGARET FORGIONE: Well, let's see if we can  
22 pull it up.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: That would be great and  
24 I ask this because my district has the most step  
25 street in the city and they are not maintained at

1  
2 all. It's similar to what Council Member Banks was  
3 just referring to. I would like to know what's the  
4 process around like maintaining them? How often are  
5 you going to ensure the safety and the cleanliness of  
6 these steps because it has become a dumping ground in  
7 my district and there's 311 calls consistently. We  
8 are calling it in and all these things, so I'm just  
9 trying to see what's the regulatory maintenance of  
10 these steps? Because currently they're all  
11 dilapidated, have mattresses and clothes and all  
12 types of things and it literally is like at this  
13 point dumping grounds and they're a form of  
14 transportation. So, in my district, we all know that  
15 we have very little access to transportation,  
16 especially in the high bridge area and so steps are a  
17 form of transportation and so I would like to know in  
18 the same way you guys are talking about bike lanes  
19 and bus lanes, how are you maintaining the steps in  
20 my district to ensure that people can access them in  
21 a safe way?

22 YDANIS RODRIGUEZ: Thank you Council Member and  
23 our Deputy Commissioner, she also will add more  
24 detail but I can tell you I understand what you're  
25

2 asking and I you know, anything that we can do to  
3 keep you know all the stairs clean and beautiful.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: Clean and with light and  
5 all the things so I need to know what the budget is,  
6 how often it's maintained, who is going out there to  
7 look because not only are they dirty, it's also dark.

8 YDANIS RODRIGUEZ: Okay.

9 MARGARET FORGIONE: Okay, thank you Council  
10 Member. So we rely on different contracts in order  
11 to clean step streets and we also coordinate with  
12 Sanitation to get that job done.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: What does that  
14 coordination look like? How often are you guys  
15 meeting?

16 MARGARET FORGIONE: In some of their recent press  
17 releases, Sanitation has specifically mentioned step  
18 street cleaning and then we also have available to us  
19 several different contracts. We have some MWBE  
20 contracts that are -

21 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: Yeah, I have a list of  
22 the ones that are in my district and the maintenance  
23 schedule, what that looks like. Also, I would like  
24 to know how often you're meeting with Sanitation  
25 because this is a real issue and I think this is a

1  
2 unique issue specifically for me because I have so  
3 many step streets and so, you're not going to hear  
4 this from anybody else the way you're going to hear  
5 from me because we have so many and I'm telling you  
6 now, I would like to know who these contracts are  
7 with because it is not being cleaned and maintained  
8 regularly. I would like to know what this contract  
9 consists of because we you know one, we have to  
10 supplement so much stuff in my district already and  
11 so often I have to send like ACE out there to like do  
12 extra work and things and it's not fair, so I really  
13 want us to know and we can do this offline but I  
14 would like to know a full plan of what that plan is  
15 for all of the step streets.

16 I just have one other really quick question.  
17 Last budget season allocated money for surfacing my  
18 district. I'm still unclear where that has taken  
19 place and when that's going to start because there  
20 has been very little communication regarding this.  
21 Although when I allocated it, we had conversations  
22 about how I wanted us to work together to make sure  
23 that we knew when, where and where it was happening.

24 MARGARET FORGIONE: Good, whenever you're ready  
25 we're happy to sit down with you and talk about which

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4 streets we recommend for resurfacing in your district  
5 and how you feel about that.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: Thank you.

7 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Yeah, we have Council  
8 Member Salaam followed by Farias.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER SALAAM: Good afternoon. I have a  
10 question, a few questions actually. I want to start  
11 off with the e-bikes and maybe make a suggestion.  
12 There has been great attention put towards drivers in  
13 terms of lowering the speed so that the drivers of  
14 vehicles drive at safer rates. Is there any plan to  
15 maybe lower the - to restrict the speed of e-bikes so  
16 that they actually don't - because a lot of them are  
17 going faster than cars now and the fact that they're  
18 on the sidewalks, the fact that we're experiencing  
19 more injuries in our communities is a great concern.

20 YDANIS RODRIGUEZ: Yes, there's a plan to we're  
21 lowering the speed limit allowed on biking.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER SALAAM: Meaning like a physical?  
23 Because it's one thing to have the education.

24 YDANIS RODRIGUEZ: So, we are in conversation  
25 looking at 15 as a potential number we have now  
26 finalized but we do acknowledge as I said before with  
27 the question asked on the challenges of e-bike that

1 reducing the speed limit is also one of the things  
2 that we're looking at.

3  
4 COUNCIL MEMBER SALAAM: We're also noticing in  
5 terms of places of worship that parishioners are  
6 receiving tickets on Sunday's, on Friday's, on  
7 Saturday's in various districts and we were wondering  
8 is there a plan to work with local leaders to allow  
9 parishioners to practice their faith without fearing  
10 being ticketed? Because the buses they're not - I'm  
11 assuming it's like a robot. If a double parked car  
12 is there and it's not in the bike lane or a bus lane,  
13 the bus still tickets and sends the ticket out.

14 YDANIS RODRIGUEZ: We're talking about the  
15 drivers who bike on the bus lane?

16 COUNCIL MEMBER SALAAM: Not the bus lane. I'm  
17 saying around churches, mosques, synagogues. We've  
18 noticed it in our districts; parishioners are  
19 receiving tickets sometimes when they - they may not  
20 even know because the tickets come in the mail but  
21 they're receiving tickets because they're doubled  
22 parked for worship. There's no parking or anything  
23 like that but it's been a practice specifically in my  
24 district for people to double park when it comes to  
25 Sunday worship, Saturday worship or Friday worship.

2 Because of the human nature of it all, ticket  
3 agencies usually understand this is a day of worship,  
4 we're not going to ticket the parishioners. Because  
5 the buses are not humans, they're ticketing  
6 parishioners.

7 YDANIS RODRIGUEZ: Yeah, we had a conversation  
8 with other elected officials in your district, more  
9 than happy to sit down with you and identify you know  
10 some places where we can you know brainstorm a little  
11 bit and see what we can do. In general, we want to  
12 keep the standard you know when it comes to the  
13 enforcement and when it comes to our bus lane. That  
14 part related to the enforcement is more the MTA under  
15 their decision but I'm more than happy to sit down  
16 with you.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER SALAAM: And just the last  
18 question regarding the resurfacing that has mentioned  
19 earlier. Despite the Council's clear request for a  
20 \$40 million increase to streets resurfacing capacity,  
21 the executive budget that we've seen includes zero  
22 dollars. How does DOT plan to ensure equitable  
23 resurfacing in historically underserved communities  
24 like those in central Harlem without a critical  
25 investment being there?

2 YDANIS RODRIGUEZ: Margaret?

3 MARGARET FORGIONE: Sure, thank you Council  
4 Member. So, every year right now we are - we perform  
5 about 1,150 lane miles of resurfacing and we allocate  
6 them analytically between the different community  
7 boards in order to ensure that every community board  
8 is getting their fair share based on the lane miles  
9 within their board.

10 And as I mentioned earlier, we move from  
11 community board to community board throughout the  
12 year in each borough to make sure that we touch every  
13 single community board every year. So, in terms of  
14 the percent of miles that are in good, fair or poor  
15 condition, it's quite consistent from community board  
16 to community board. So, we're happy to sit with you  
17 and explain what we have planned for the rest of the  
18 year into next year in your Council District and if  
19 you have any locations you see that you feel haven't  
20 been addressed that should be addressed, let us know  
21 and we will try to incorporate them into the  
22 schedule.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER SALAAM: Thank you. We'll  
24 definitely be in touch.

25

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2 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay, we have questions  
3 from Council Member Farias followed by Ossè.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER FARIAS: Hi, good morning folks.  
5 Hi Commissioner. I just have a couple district  
6 related questions if possible and I'm sure they're  
7 related to some of the responses you've given us  
8 already. Just a question regarding street lights and  
9 street lighting. Several constituents in my district  
10 have complaints of street lights being out, their  
11 bulbs not being replaced for even sometimes upwards  
12 to a year. I know myself and my office are  
13 consistently reminding folks to use our 311 process.  
14 I know if I see whether it's a stop light or a street  
15 light out, I take a picture and my 311 app is  
16 overwhelmed with service request numbers but I just  
17 want to know how long it usually takes for DOT to  
18 replace these lightbulbs on average and if there's  
19 internal policies of DOT that have a mandated length  
20 of time and then how long does it typically take to  
21 close these cases when complaints come through for  
22 311?

23 YDANIS RODRIGUEZ: Definitely, we have the street  
24 lighting in most of the 6,000 miles of the street  
25 that we have and we compose by 44,000 intersections.

2 By standard, we run a very tight with in house and  
3 contract resources, taking care of the light. I was  
4 one of those Council Members calling DOT when I  
5 didn't see a light working in my district and I never  
6 take that approach as you tell me which intersection  
7 the light is not working, it's the agency. You know  
8 we take very responsible the commitment that we've  
9 been asked to be in this role where we are proud of  
10 what we - how we keep you know our light and our  
11 light poles but that's in the general piece. When it  
12 comes to the details, I will give it to the First  
13 Deputy Commissioner to get into more details.

14 MARGARET FORGIONE: Thank you for the question.  
15 So, the easiest thing that we can do is just replace  
16 a light bulb in a street light that has been burnt  
17 out. So, those requests are handled very quickly,  
18 generally within a week, so if it's only a burnt out  
19 bulb, that is very quick and we have contractors who  
20 do that work for us.

21 What does take longer sometimes is when there's a  
22 problem with the electrical current and that's a  
23 situation where we have to coordinate with Con Ed in  
24 order to come in and repair the electrical current  
25 and that's often sometimes where there are these

2 frustrating situations where it does take a lot  
3 longer. So, those are the situations, if you ever  
4 have those and you're feeling frustrated, our borough  
5 Commissioners can always help with those and we can  
6 reach out to Con Ed and try to keep those moving.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER FARIAS: Sure, can I just ask in  
8 terms of needing Con Ed to step in with an electrical  
9 current issue, how are folks notified? Do you  
10 typically just respond to the 311 requests stating  
11 that it's in - like it's pending or it's held over?  
12 Are you typically relating those to for example, my  
13 office?

14 MARGARET FORGIONE: So, the question is like how  
15 are we explaining exactly what the nature of the  
16 problem is?

17 COUNCIL MEMBER FARIAS: Yeah.

18 MARGARET FORGIONE: I will check on how well we  
19 do that and if we need to give better information, we  
20 can do that.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER FARIAS: Okay. Thank you so much.  
22 Chair, can I have additional - Chairs because I sit  
23 on both Committee's. Can I have additional time?

24 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Yeah go ahead.  
25

2 COUNCIL MEMBER FARIAS: Thank you. Just a couple  
3 more. We've been seeing a lot of complaints recently  
4 coming in that are specifically targeting some of the  
5 homeowners for having cracks in their sidewalks. I'm  
6 super familiar with the trees and sidewalks program  
7 as a former staffer who used to do this like part  
8 time for folks. But often times the constituents are  
9 fined with major cracks in the sidewalk or they're in  
10 some block way, especially around some of the parks.  
11 Can you folks talk about how the issues that come  
12 from 311? It's just like, are you doing this case by  
13 case basis because of 311 complaints or is there a  
14 larger plan that you have enforcement agents going  
15 out trying to you know regulate some of the trees and  
16 sidewalks or some of the sidewalk replacements that  
17 need to happen?

18 MARGARET FORGIONE: So, much of our sidewalk  
19 inspection work is done as a result of complaints and  
20 when we do get a complaint about a specific property,  
21 we don't only go to that property, what we do is we  
22 look at all of the properties on both sides of that  
23 block. We don't want to get into a situation where  
24 somebody is in a dispute with a neighbor and calls us  
25 about the neighbor but we're not really looking at

1 things a little bit more holistically. So, what our  
2 inspectors will do is examine the whole block and any  
3 homeowner or any property owner that has a sidewalk  
4 violation will receive a notice to correct. Now that  
5 is not a monetary fine. They are not receiving a  
6 violation that they have to pay.  
7

8 COUNCIL MEMBER FARIAS: Sure.

9 MARGARET FORGIONE: Instead, I guess you're like  
10 an expert at this, this is great. This is a lien on  
11 the property and when the property owner may go to  
12 sell the property, they're going to have a problem  
13 doing so and further, their insurance company may  
14 give them a hard time about insuring that sidewalk if  
15 it does need repairs. So, that's generally how its  
16 done. We also can come in and make repairs and back  
17 charge a property owner if they have failed to fix it  
18 on their own. When we do that, you mention trees.  
19 Trees always gets complicated right? Tree roots, we  
20 love trees. We love good sidewalks but tree roots  
21 can push up sidewalks. So, in that case, if we do  
22 repair a property, we do not charge the homeowner for  
23 any portions of the sidewalk that were damaged due to  
24 the tree roots.  
25

2 We also coordinate with Parks. They have a  
3 pretty extensive program to address tree issues at  
4 sidewalks. So, it's a little complex but if there's  
5 ever locations in question, we're happy to talk  
6 through them.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER FARIAS: Yeah, I think that makes  
8 a little bit more sense. I think typically in the  
9 past, folks are used to hearing, we put the complaint  
10 in a one property. One property gets examined but it  
11 sounds like we are now more comprehensively looking  
12 at the entire street and block, which makes a lot of  
13 sense if repairs are going to happen, they can happen  
14 more extensively but that is probably the answer that  
15 will be most helpful to my constituent staff. And  
16 then I just have a couple specifics and I'll just  
17 list them all out and then if folks just want to tag  
18 on any responses. Are there any plans for  
19 redevelopment of the median on Rosedale Avenue  
20 between Bruckner and Watson? I've toured it both  
21 with the Commissioner and with our Borough  
22 Commissioner. I've asked for us to maybe take some  
23 time out and we've all been very busy but take some  
24 time out to look at how to redesign this, maybe have  
25 some angled parking, maybe revitalize some of the

1 green space. Just cause it's right next to one of  
2 our biggest NYCHA campuses but also next to a  
3 community center and a lot of that underutilized  
4 lands could be properly utilized for the amount of  
5 folks that are there and that could benefit from some  
6 outside space. And then similarly, just wanted  
7 thoughts from the agency if there's any plans to  
8 redesign Hugh Grant Circle. We know there's a lot of  
9 talks around reimagining the cross Bronx. There's a  
10 lot of changes happening at the Hugh Grant Circle  
11 Parkchester Train Stop and just with heavy congestion  
12 happening right now a lot of the buses sitting double  
13 parked on the parkway along with the commercial strip  
14 that we have there that has a lot of deliveries if  
15 that's in any of the reimagining or the thought  
16 processes of capital planning from DOT if we can talk  
17 a little bit about those two.

19 MARGARET FORGIONE: Okay, I'm happy to talk about  
20 Rosedale. I know Rosedale is a longstanding issue.  
21 It is Parks Property. It is or it was - it started  
22 out as a green space and then over time the community  
23 has parked there. I think we do need to decide once  
24 and for all what is that space. What should that  
25 space be? It would be something that we would want

2 to agree to with Parks if it was going to be turned  
3 into something that had more parking. It might want  
4 to be some kind of compromised space. I'm not sure  
5 that has a combination of some parking and green  
6 space but working with Anthony. We're happy to sit  
7 down with Parks and with you and try to figure that  
8 out and then if we do decide to alter it, you know  
9 obviously we'll have to secure funding in order to  
10 rebuild it.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER FARIAS: That sounds great.

12 MARGARET FORGIONE: And I don't have an answer  
13 for Hugh Grant. I don't know if anybody else does.  
14 If not, we can get back to you.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER FARIAS: Yeah, I'd love to talk  
16 about both of these things. There's a lot happening  
17 in Hugh Grant Circle, especially now we'll have an  
18 ADA compliant train station. You know, towards the  
19 end of the summer, beginning of fall and there will  
20 be some reconfiguration that I think needs to happen  
21 just to reassess the amount of like the ebon and flow  
22 we'll have of the amount of constituents that are  
23 going to be utilizing that train station and just  
24 some of the blockages that happen when doing the  
25 entire circle.

2 And then yeah, I'd love to talk about reimagining  
3 that entire green space. It sounds like a great end  
4 of term project we can all work together on but thank  
5 you for the additional time and responses.

6 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay last two from Council  
7 Member Ossè followed by Hanks.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER OSSÈ: Thank you Chairs and good  
9 afternoon Commissioner and good folks from the  
10 Department of Transportation. I just want to follow  
11 up on a issue, it's a local issue in my district  
12 around trench repair. This is located on Hancock  
13 between Marcie and Norstrand. I've been pushing, I  
14 know the money was already allocated for this trench  
15 repair many, many years ago, I want to say five prior  
16 to the pandemic and I know that there's been some  
17 issues. Because of the pandemic in terms of getting  
18 this trench repair done, we last sent an email about  
19 this on October 17, 2024. This is my third year of  
20 advocating for this trench repair and I just wanted  
21 to speak to you and see what the update is on that  
22 trench repair.

23 MARGARET FORGIONE: Okay, I believe this is  
24 trench repair that was going to be addressed between  
25 DEP and DOT, is that correct?

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2 COUNCIL MEMBER OSSÈ: I believe so, yes.

3 MARGARET FORGIONE: Okay, uhm, I can follow up  
4 right afterwards and get an update for you. We work  
5 collaboratively at locations. There's different  
6 locations around the city that for some unknown  
7 reason has sunk. Something could have been when the  
8 road was built many, many years ago. Something could  
9 have been put in there that decayed and then has  
10 sunk. So, what we're doing is uhm, we're working  
11 with DEP on these locations. We're not trying to you  
12 know figure out what went wrong many decades ago,  
13 we're just trying to address them but I am being  
14 reminded that we do in this location, we do have a  
15 DVC project for next year for 2026.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER OSSÈ: This is the third time its  
17 been pushed back. You know this is going on next  
18 year will be six years since DOT has committed to  
19 doing work on this project. Is it going to be pushed  
20 back again next year? Am I going to wait ten years  
21 for this trench to repaired? I think that's - that's  
22 a bit concerning right?

23 YDANIS RODRIGUEZ: This year -

24 PAUL OCHOA: Council Member I'm happy to address  
25 frustration. Capital projects unfortunately, it's

1 about a six year timeline from when the project gets  
2 funded to when we internally produce what we call a  
3 capital project initiation package that gets sent to  
4 DDC and then they do the preliminary design, final  
5 design and then bid out the contract. It's usually a  
6 six year timeline. I do have it here. It was pushed  
7 out by a year, which does happen. Sometimes the BIDs  
8 don't come in, come in way too high and then the DDC  
9 needs to rebid it or a bid, the highest rank team  
10 like goes under. So, there's a lot of issues that  
11 happen throughout the cycle that do delay project.

12  
13 The good news though is we do expect registration  
14 this fall and construction to start in Fiscal 2026  
15 for this set of trench restorations. It is usually  
16 up to DDC and the contractor to determine which sites  
17 in particular they'll start first. We'd be happy to  
18 facilitate a conversation.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER OSSÉ: This site should certainly  
20 start first I think. What is the agency doing around  
21 expediting this process? I mean six years is - the  
22 fact that that is a norm for a project.

23 Commissioner, what work have you been doing over the  
24 past four years to condense that, that period of time

2 for when a project comes into completion? It seems  
3 very inefficient.

4 YDANIS RODRIGUEZ: Yeah, it's about other  
5 procurement process that go through a project.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER OSSÈ: No, I understand that and  
7 what are you doing to -

8 YDANIS RODRIGUEZ: Listen, you're going to be  
9 seeing - you're going to be seeing now probably I  
10 will - I started and again, it should be your  
11 expectation that we should change what has not worked  
12 in the past. But I can tell you when I was elected  
13 in my first budget, I put \$500,000 -

14 COUNCIL MEMBER OSSÈ: Sure, sure, so who's  
15 responsible for the delay in that procurement? It's  
16 not nothing on your end.

17 YDANIS RODRIGUEZ: No, listen that's not part of  
18 the story but let me give you with this. We can get  
19 back to you with more details. Timing is the right  
20 one that we have in front of us. Capital project is  
21 taken a lot from the moment as Paul described.

22 Everything that it is taken from the idea to the  
23 concept to the designing, to present it to the BID.

24 So, again we hear you loud and clear and I'm more  
25 than happy to - see, I'll try to figure out a way of

2 how we can move quickly but the timing is the  
3 standard timing for any capital project.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER OSSÈ: So, I hear that it's  
5 standard timing. My question for you is and I think  
6 I understand there's different stages to this right  
7 in terms of procurement, in terms of design, in terms  
8 of you know public testimonies. Is there anything in  
9 your power that you can do to condense any part of  
10 that process?

11 YDANIS RODRIGUEZ: Yeah, so the answer is the  
12 signed bill. The thing is that -

13 COUNCIL MEMBER OSSÈ: I'm sorry can you say that  
14 again?

15 YDANIS RODRIGUEZ: You know we need to get Albany  
16 to allow New York City to use the signed bills for  
17 all project capital project that we do. If that  
18 would be the case, it will allow to cut a lot of time  
19 not only for the project of DOT. Like, most of the  
20 capital project that is on DOT, we do through DDC and  
21 they're a great partner but we, again, we have a lot  
22 of constraint but the design build is what we need  
23 from Albany.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER OSSÈ: So, go ahead.  
25

2 PAUL OCHOA: Yeah Council Member, the  
3 Administration has been seeking DDC, has been talking  
4 to Albany to get grant DDC authority, which means  
5 that would be on the same part as like the MTA or the  
6 School Construction Authority, which has allowed us  
7 to like to condense a lot of the procurement steps  
8 that you're rightfully frustrated and we are too.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER OSSE: I think, and I'm happy to  
10 hear that you know there needs - there's a campaign  
11 to pressure the state to condense you know this  
12 standard period of time in which projects are  
13 completed. I think you should lean on us to be  
14 partners and advocating on your behalf for that. You  
15 know I rarely hear advocacy around this and I think  
16 this is something that really proves to people that  
17 government works right? I think six years for a  
18 project is really insane, so keep us in the loop on  
19 how we can support you in those efforts on pressuring  
20 the state if it really is the states responsibility  
21 for all of it.

22 The second question - am I allowed to ask more  
23 questions Chairs?

24 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: You get one more minute.

25 COUNCIL MEMBER OSSE: Okay, uhm, is around -

2 YDANIS RODRIGUEZ: If you don't mind Council  
3 Member, I know you're throwing the ball to the state  
4 but I'm saying it's about - a lot of it you know  
5 timeline on construction has to do very connected  
6 with procurement and designing. So, I think that  
7 even at the beginning of this Administration there  
8 was some taskforce that the mayor put together with  
9 the Comptroller, OMB, and others. I think fine  
10 ideas, trying to put some reform how we can cut the  
11 time of construction in the city.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER OSSE: Sure. Can my minute start  
13 now?

14 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Yeah.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER OSSE: Uhm, have you spoken about  
16 any progress that has been made between DOT and NYPD  
17 about double parking and double parking enforcement  
18 within the city? Is that something that the DOT  
19 works with NYPD on?

20 YDANIS RODRIGUEZ: Yeah, I feel that the new  
21 things and again, I'm getting a lot of heat. There  
22 was even a rally in front of 55 Water Street. You  
23 know they were blaming me for all those tickets that  
24 they're getting in double parking. No, there has  
25 been a culture in New York City where people believe

1 that double parking is legal and the thing is no,  
2 it's not legal. We have limited space and I think  
3 for the moment when someone get out from the car to  
4 get a coffee, to go to get a green juice, they should  
5 know that if they do double parking, there's a  
6 consequence. Our American enforcement is the new  
7 thing that we are using where if someone is double  
8 park, now the bus, the MTA buses, they have the  
9 camera. They are able to give the ticket to anyone,  
10 all New Yorkers if we do the double parking.  
11

12 COUNCIL MEMBER OSSE: And how about locations  
13 where there aren't MTA buses? For example, I would  
14 love for my district to see an enforcement  
15 specifically on Dekalb Avenue between Troup and  
16 Margus Garvey. The double parking is out of control  
17 there and I've been complaining about it for years to  
18 both the PD and the Department of Transportation.  
19 It's unsafe for drivers, for cyclists, for  
20 pedestrians. It slows the entire neighborhood down.  
21 I'd love to get an update or at least some visible  
22 enforcement on that specific block.

23 YDANIS RODRIGUEZ: More than happy to coordinate  
24 with you and even to coordinate some visibility with  
25 the NYPD, Transportation Chief, myself and you,

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2 enforcing on double parking because I think that's  
3 unacceptable and I feel that we need to have only one  
4 standard. If we don't allow double parking in 5<sup>th</sup>  
5 Avenue and other places, so double parking shouldn't  
6 be allowed in any community. What we know that it  
7 contribute to a lot of other traffic that we are  
8 dealing with. So, I'm more than happy to follow up  
9 with you.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER OSSE: Okay thank you.

11 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay final question from  
12 Council Member Hanks.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER HANKS: Thank you Chair.

14 Commissioner Rodriguez, my constituents continue to  
15 raise concern about the lack of coordination between  
16 DOT and MTA at the St. George Ferry Terminal. Riders  
17 regularly miss their connections. The St. George  
18 Ferry Terminal in Whitehall and on the Staten Island  
19 side is one of the city's most important  
20 transportation hubs and this poor condition is  
21 undermining the daily commutes of thousands of  
22 residents.

23 In addition, the Ferry ramps and the exist areas  
24 in the St. George Ferry terminal are filthy, they  
25 reek of all kinds of insanity and despite no clear -

2 there's no clear smoking rules whether it's  
3 marijuana, whether it's cigarettes, there should be  
4 signage there that clearly say that you cannot do  
5 that. These areas have also become hot spots for  
6 homeless and even criminal activity. And this is  
7 Staten Island's front porch and it should be clean,  
8 it should be safe, it should be welcoming.

9 So, I ask, when can Staten Island expect a better  
10 coordination between DOT and the MTA to fix these  
11 systemic issues and when will DOT take a meaningful  
12 action when it comes to the cleanup and the  
13 maintenance of the terminal both inside and out?  
14 Thank you.

15 YDANIS RODRIGUEZ: Yeah, quality of life is a top  
16 priority for Mayor Eric Adams and as we have the 500  
17 blocks that we've been doing coordination work  
18 between the NYPD or the agency on enforcing in those  
19 blocks. I'm more than happy also to bring that site  
20 to that 500 block and see anything that we can do.  
21 You are so lucky to represent the area. You know  
22 Staten Island; it have like 18 million ridership last  
23 year. The number continue increasing. It's the  
24 largest ferry that we have in any -

25 COUNCIL MEMBER HANKS: 70,000 people a day.

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4 YDANIS RODRIGUEZ: Yeah so and anything that we  
5 can do and again, I know all about action more than  
6 words. That's what I told Rick to remember to follow  
7 with the Council Member there and with you to but I  
8 want to see how we can talk to the team you know from  
9 Deputy Mayors of Public Safety and other agencies to  
10 look and address.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER HANKS: We'll follow up with a  
12 walk through, yes. One more question Chair very  
13 quickly? Staten Island doesn't have city bike and we  
14 should. This is an equity issue. Every single  
15 program should have a five borough participation.  
16 So, I'd love to talk about getting a city bike on  
17 Staten Island as well. Thank you Chair.

18 YDANIS RODRIGUEZ: We're working right now with  
19 the President of the Staten Island university and  
20 Rosanne right? They're doing a good job. One of the  
21 things that they're looking to do is a pilot project  
22 to provide bike through a pilot project to the  
23 student that they go around all those acres of the  
24 university.

25 For Mayor Eric Adams, Staten Island is not  
forgotten borough anymore, so definitely our  
commitment is to connect all community with city bike

2 and micromobility so that all New Yorkers should be  
3 able to move by car, by train, by bus, city bike and  
4 micromobility.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER HANKS: Thank you so much.

6 YDANIS RODRIGUEZ: Thank you.

7 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay, we are way behind to  
8 get to the Parks Committee. I'm going to hand it  
9 over to Chair Powers to close us out.

10 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you and I just  
11 wanted to just put a pin in and we'll pick this back  
12 up at another hearing in terms of the agencies  
13 inability to meet the Streets Plan mandates and the  
14 consistent blaming of the members in terms of you  
15 know where they're being located. While we've been  
16 in this hearing, along Beach 20<sup>th</sup> Street in Rockaway  
17 where there is a bike lane, we don't call it the bike  
18 lane to nowhere because it's literally one bike lane  
19 that doesn't go beyond that one block. And NYPD was  
20 out there today towing cars.

21 So, the merchants have been unable to get their  
22 merchandize there. There's a disconnect with the  
23 agency and the community that really has to be worked  
24 through. And so, I will follow up with the office  
25 but again, I just wanted to put a pin in that in

2 terms of example when we're often pointed at in terms  
3 of the agencies inability to meet its goal, get the  
4 agency place a bike lane on one block that's not  
5 connected to anything, that did not have community  
6 support but yet still did that. So, I thank the  
7 agency for its testimony today and look forward to  
8 following up on that.

9 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you.

10 YDANIS RODRIGUEZ: I stand on behalf of all the  
11 6,000 men and women that made this agency and the  
12 previous Commissioner before me. Like, and  
13 especially our borough commissioners, they are the  
14 ones, the team who are representing all the project  
15 and funds of each Council Member. This project, the  
16 one that the agency does, we got it who Commissioner  
17 is in time, is in place, it is a more complicit one.  
18 A lot of the work that we do most follow federal  
19 standards. A lot of the work that we do is happening  
20 at both our streets where a few inches down, other  
21 utilities are moving their services in the street.

22 So, I'm very proud of the work that we do. I  
23 think that there's a lot of accomplishment that we  
24 all can share and resolve, the Council and the  
25 Administration. There's always a space to grow and

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4 more than happy to continue working with both Chairs  
5 and the Speaker to address how we continue doing the  
6 work that we do. Providing 26 percent of our street  
7 for the movement of safe and efficient of people in  
8 vehicles.

9 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you Commissioner.  
10 Thank you to your team. We'll take a short break and  
11 we're going to start with the Parks Department.  
12 [02:31:45]- [02:47:2].

13 [GAVEL] Okay, good afternoon. Welcome back. We  
14 are now turning to the Parks Department, Department  
15 of Parks and Recreation. An agency that keeps New  
16 York City green, active and connected. I'm Council  
17 Member Justin Brannan, I Chair the Council's Finance  
18 Committee. I'm joined by Council Member Shekar  
19 Krishnan, Chair of the Committee on Parks and  
20 Recreation. We've been joined by Council Members  
21 Brewer, Carr, Salaam, Ung and Louis and welcome  
22 Commissioner Donoghue, it's good to see you. We're  
23 glad to have you here. The Proposed FY26 Parks  
24 Department Budget is \$667.3 million, which is an  
25 increase of \$50.6 million or 8.2 percent over the  
preliminary plan that came out back in January. That  
includes more support for swim safety and second

2 shift cleanups at high use parks but for a department  
3 responsible for 30,000 acres of land, 1,000  
4 playgrounds and 800 athletic fields, the Council  
5 knows that that number is still far too small.

6 Parks Department represents under half a percent  
7 of the total executive budget and there are nearly  
8 330 vacancies. Something that we will be certainly  
9 asking OMB about in a couple of weeks. That's  
10 hundreds of workers that are not out there  
11 maintaining our parks, enforcing our rules, planting  
12 trees and keeping things safe and clean and the  
13 Council wants to fix that.

14 In our preliminary budget response, the Council  
15 pushed for \$32.5 million to restore these critical  
16 positions, gardeners, pruners, park workers and  
17 enforcement officers because while everything else in  
18 the city keeps getting more expensive, a day in the  
19 park last I checked is still free and that matters.  
20 Parks are truly the great equalizer. Every New  
21 Yorker no matter what their zip code deserves access  
22 to green space that's safe, clean and looked after.

23 So, today, I'll be focusing on the PEG  
24 restorations, capital needs and making sure the Parks  
25 Budget reflects how much New Yorkers truly rely on

1  
2 these spaces. I was out last weekend in a couple of  
3 parks and they were just absolutely bursting with  
4 people. A testament to just how important our open  
5 green spaces are but in the interest of time, I'm  
6 going to turn it over to my Co-Chair Council Member  
7 Krishnan for his opening statement and we'll get  
8 going.

9 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: Thank you so much Chair  
10 Brannan. Good afternoon everyone and welcome to the  
11 Parks and Recreation Committees hearing on the Fiscal  
12 2026 Executive Budget for the Department of Parks and  
13 Recreation.

14 My name is Shekar Krishnan and I am the Chair of  
15 our Parks and Recreation Committee. I would like to  
16 acknowledge and thank all of my fellow Council  
17 Members who are here today as Chair Brannan announced  
18 before. Today, we will be hearing testimony from the  
19 Department of Parks and Recreation on its Fiscal 2026  
20 Executive Budget, which totals approximately \$667.3  
21 million. An increase of \$26.8 million since the  
22 release of the Preliminary Budget in January but we  
23 still have a long way to go. While it is always  
24 better to see increases instead of decreases as we  
25 saw in previous years, this is still nowhere near the

1 amount of money that our Parks Department deserves  
2 and it is no where near the one percent or \$1 billion  
3 goal that the Mayor campaigned on and is currently  
4 campaigning on.  
5

6 So, just to put it in perspective, \$1 billion was  
7 the commitment broken year after year. We are at a  
8 Parks Department budget of \$667 million. New Yorkers  
9 of every borough and neighborhood want clean and safe  
10 parks to enjoy. And let's be very clear about this,  
11 if we want a clean and safe city, as Mayor Adams  
12 declares, then a key way to do so is to keep our  
13 parks clean and safe. You can't have a clean and  
14 safe city without clean and safe parks. This budget  
15 while doing and restoring some funding and in some  
16 ways a step in the right direction, does not provide  
17 nearly enough resources to make this a reality.

18 Clean, green and safe parks, parks that all of us  
19 as New Yorkers rely on and enjoy requires far more in  
20 funding and investments. The Fiscal 2026 Executive  
21 Budget includes \$18.7 million in new needs for FY26,  
22 \$8.1 million in other adjustments, and thankfully no  
23 PEGs or cuts. But again, we should not be in a world  
24 where we are thinking about cuts and restoring cuts.  
25 We have to be in a world of investments.

2 There are several new needs in this plan,  
3 including increased headcount for fleet service  
4 baselined funding for the Office of Marine Debris  
5 Disposal and vessel surrendering and a number of one  
6 shots or temporary funding for urban parks rangers,  
7 green thumb and tree stump removal. But this is a  
8 far cry from the permanent comprehensive funding and  
9 vision that our City Council laid out in our budget  
10 response. I mentioned earlier that this budget  
11 includes \$18.7 million in new needs but the number is  
12 largely made up of temporary, so-called one shot  
13 positions. One shots are items or programs that are  
14 only funded for one year, which means that once the  
15 fiscal year is over, the program will be cut if  
16 additional funding is provided. In other words, once  
17 that year is up, the workers who are funded on those  
18 lines are in danger of losing their jobs. These are  
19 workers that do not just work for a year. They work  
20 every year, every day cleaning our parks and keeping  
21 them safe. I know that because I've talked to them.  
22 I've spent time with them. I have heard their  
23 stories and their concerns when their jobs are in  
24 jeopardy every year. You cannot run an organization.  
25 You cannot run a company on temporary lines that

1 expire every year for permanent work and you  
2 certainly cannot run a crucial city agency like the  
3 Parks Department in this way.

4  
5 What this is means is that for 50 urban park  
6 rangers in our city, their jobs are only secure for  
7 one year. The Council has to fight for funding every  
8 year and restore it so that these New Yorkers do not  
9 lose their jobs. This is no way to live. Not  
10 knowing if you will have a job in a few months is  
11 incredible stressful and has immensely negative  
12 impacts on your mental health and wellbeing.

13 In my own personal conversations with urban park  
14 rangers, they have expressed these feelings and much  
15 more. These positions are not the only things that  
16 are only funded for one year. Tree stump removal,  
17 green thumb funding, \$3 million for forestry  
18 management are only given one year of funding. In  
19 other words, taking care of our trees, managing our  
20 urban forest is done on a temporary budget every  
21 year. Even though this work is permanent and even  
22 more crucial in our city when we have seen over 250  
23 wildfires in two weeks last fall.

24 These one shots must end. We need to ensure that  
25 the Administration, the agency and OMB make sure that

2 these funds are baselined or made permanent so  
3 workers can have the job stability they need to  
4 provide for their families and our Parks Department  
5 can have the stability to keep doing their work of  
6 providing clean, green, and resilient parks for all  
7 New Yorkers.

8 The Committee looks forward to hearing testimony  
9 today related to the FY26 Executive Plan.  
10 Specifically related to lifeguards, urban park  
11 rangers, PEP officers, forestry workers and the  
12 capital budget.

13 Before we begin with testimony, I would like to  
14 thank our Council staff for their hard work. Our  
15 finance team of Chima Obichere, Jack Storey, and  
16 Michael Sherman. Our committee staff Christopher  
17 Sartori and Patrick Mulvihill, and my own staff Gregg  
18 Clark Chanel Martinez, and Victoria Opperman.

19 I would also like to recognize that this will be  
20 the final hearing with our Parks Commissioner Sue  
21 Donoghue. Commissioner Donoghue has been a  
22 phenomenal leader for our city's park system.  
23 [APPLAUSE]. And she has been a great partner to work  
24 with. There was no issue too small or too large for  
25 me to be able to work with Commissioner Donoghue on.

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4 Every single issue, every phone call I made, every  
5 issue that needs to be discussed, Commissioner  
6 Donoghue was there to see it through.

7 She has been a phenomenal leader for our parks  
8 department and on behalf of the entire committee and  
9 our New York City Council, I want to thank you for  
10 your service to the Parks Department. You will be  
11 sorely missed. It is a great loss for our city for  
12 your departure and I thank you for your passion and  
13 service to all New Yorkers.

14 I will now turn it over to our Committee Chair,  
15 Chair Brannan in Finance and Committee Counsel to go  
16 over some procedural items and swear in the  
17 representatives from the Parks Department.

18 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you Chair Krishnan.  
19 We've also been joined by Council Members Hanks,  
20 Holden, Rivera, and Paladino. Just a reminder, if  
21 you're here to testify on either the transportation  
22 or parks budget, make sure you fill out a witness  
23 slip with the Sergeant at Arms in the back. We will  
24 hear from the public right after the parks panel.  
25 Committee Counsel will now swear in the witnesses.

26 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Good afternoon. Do you  
27 affirm to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing

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4 but the truth before the Committee and to respond  
5 honestly to Council Members? Commissioner Donoghue?

6 SUE DONOGHUE: I do.

7 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: First Deputy Commissioner  
8 Rodriguez-Rosa.

9 IRIS RODRIGUEZ-ROSA: I do.

10 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Deputy Commissioner Wang?

11 JOY WANG: Yes.

12 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Deputy Commissioner Boorstyn.  
13 Deputy Commissioner Nelson, Deputy Commissioner  
14 Focht, uh Assistant Commissioner Osborne, Officer  
15 Stark, and Chief Drury.

16 MATT DRURY: I do.

17 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you.

18 SUE DONOGHUE: Okay, Good afternoon Chair  
19 Brannan, Chair Krishnan, members of the Finance  
20 Committee and Parks Committee and other members of  
21 the Council. My name is Sue Donoghue and I'm honored  
22 to be here today testifying as the Commissioner of  
23 New York City Department of Parks and Recreation and  
24 to be joined today here in this room by several  
25 members of our agencies incredible senior staff  
leadership team.

2 Firstly, I want to recognize the Council for its  
3 continued support of our city's open spaces and for  
4 championing the importance of parks for all New  
5 Yorkers. Thank you for the opportunity to discuss  
6 the agencies executive budget for Fiscal Year 2026  
7 and to provide an update on our agencies efforts to  
8 build and maintain a healthy and thriving park  
9 system. The arrival of warmer weather in the spring  
10 means we're heading into our peak season. When our  
11 city's green and open spaces truly come alive and  
12 more and more people get outdoors to take advantage  
13 of our amazing parks, beaches, and pools to lead  
14 happier, healthier lives. And we've been busy  
15 delivering results for New Yorkers. We were recently  
16 joined by students from PS 52 in Staten Island along  
17 with Council Member Carr to cut the ribbon on a \$3.5  
18 million reconstruction of Dongan Playground,  
19 reopening a new, attractive play space featuring  
20 enhanced resilience to extreme weather and brand new  
21 amenities for the community to enjoy. We also  
22 started construction on a new public park in Queens.  
23 Lieutenant Michae R. Davidson Playground, which was  
24 named after a heroic member of the FDNY who lost his  
25 life in the line of duty in 2018 and grew up in the

1 adjacent apartment complex. This \$4.8 million  
2 investment will include a fire fighter themed play  
3 area for children, a peaceful seating area, a public  
4 restroom, and a restored historic outdoor pavilion.

5  
6 This spring, we were thrilled to celebrate the  
7 reopening of the Tompkins Square Park Field House, a  
8 \$5.6 million investment by the Administration to  
9 modernize the public restrooms, ensure accessibility,  
10 upgrade the buildings infrastructure and create a  
11 more functional space for park operations. In  
12 conjunction with the Field House reopening, we  
13 transformed the area on the north side of the  
14 building, with brightly painted games for kids,  
15 picnic and ping pong tables, benches and decorative  
16 plantings. We also spruced up the nearby Slocum  
17 Memorial Fountain, and our incredible local  
18 volunteers have helped to further beautify the area,  
19 helping ensure that Tompkins Square Park can remain a  
20 vital resource for the East Village Community for  
21 years to come. This long awaited project is a  
22 testament to our dedication to making our parks more  
23 inclusive and it's a great example of how our parks  
24 and public spaces make our neighborhoods more  
25 engaging, accessible and livable.

1  
2 Protecting this livability means we all need to  
3 do our part to keep our parks clean. So, we were  
4 proud to recently enact new agency rules to increase  
5 penalties on bad actors who illegally dump trash in  
6 and around our parks. We appreciate the partnership  
7 with our sister agency DSNY in working alongside us  
8 to crack down on illegal dumping and get tough on  
9 irresponsible entities that think our parks are an  
10 appropriate place to dump their trash.

11 This enhanced enforcement will address a major  
12 challenge at our parks that exhaust a considerable  
13 amount of our staff's time and resources. Allowing  
14 us to better focus on serving New Yorkers that are -  
15 observing New Yorkers that are appropriately using  
16 our parks. For example, thanks to increased mayoral  
17 baselined funding provided earlier this year, our  
18 newest second shift evening and weekend park  
19 maintenance workers have been fully hired, trained  
20 and deployed. These new team members are already  
21 hard at work, caring for 100 new busy park hotspots,  
22 which means the agency is now able to provide second  
23 shift coverage at a grand total of 200 separate  
24 heavily used sites within 121 of our busiest parks.

2 Of course, as the temperatures rise, we're  
3 gearing up for the opening of our public beaches  
4 Saturday, May 24<sup>th</sup>. Unlike a lot of other cities  
5 around the country, we have been able to open all of  
6 our pools and beaches in recent summers and we expect  
7 to be able to do that again this summer, despite what  
8 continues to be a very challenging hiring  
9 environment. As we have shared with the Council  
10 previously, we have worked tirelessly to find ways to  
11 recruit new potential lifeguards and encourage more  
12 lifeguards to return and help keep our beaches and  
13 pools safe for all New Yorkers to enjoy. Though it's  
14 still a bit too early to speculate about the final  
15 staffing levels that we will ultimately reach. We  
16 are cautiously optimistic about the progress we've  
17 seen, a result of our intense and focused effort to  
18 recruit and retain these vital members of the Parks  
19 team.

20 Turning to the specific topic for this hearing,  
21 the Fiscal Year 2026 Executive Budget reflects the  
22 Administrations ongoing commitment to fiscal  
23 responsibility amid the ongoing economic and fiscal  
24 challenges facing the city while maintaining critical  
25 services for all New Yorkers and investing in a

greener, healthier city. The operating budget for our agency in the executive budget is \$667.3 million, including new baselined funding for additional staff mechanics and service technicians to help care for our fleet of agency vehicles. It also includes baseline OTPS funding for our Office of Marine Debris Disposal and Vessel surrendering, which will allow us to more proactively address the issue of derelict, abandoned vessels and large marine debris from our city shorelines and waterways, and launch a public vessel turn in program.

Since the establishment of the new office in 2024, with the initial funding that was provided by the Administration at that time, we have removed 82 vessels and over 430 cubic yards of debris from waterways across the city, which had been serious public safety navigational and environmental hazards.

Our agencies ten year capital plan is \$10.4 billion and over \$250 million in new investment has been provided in the newest plan. This includes over \$103 million for a full reconstruction of our Prospect Park Garage compound. This vital operational hub serves as the headquarters for our skilled trades, forestry, borough crews,

1 horticulture, and fleet operations serving the entire  
2 borough of Brooklyn. These facilities, which were  
3 initially constructed between the 1800's and the  
4 1920's had not seen any major improvements in over 30  
5 years. So, we're very excited to provide these  
6 necessary upgrades that will give our dedicated staff  
7 the working space they need and deserve so they can  
8 keep our parks in the best condition possible.

9  
10 We were also very excited to announce a \$51  
11 million investment to reconstruct the historic Tony  
12 Dapolito Outdoor Pool in Manhattan, including the  
13 preservation of the beloved mural created by famed  
14 artist Keith Haring, as well as seven new playground  
15 renovations in the Bronx, community improvements to  
16 be delivered as part of the Metro Bronx, Metro-North  
17 Station Area plan.

18 On a closing note, many of you may be aware that  
19 after three and a half incredible years leading the  
20 agency, I will be stepping down as Commissioner at  
21 the end of the month. It has been the greatest honor  
22 and privilege to serve alongside my fellow parkies,  
23 dedicated public servants who bring our parks to life  
24 every day with their hard work, passion and care for  
25 our city's green spaces.

2 Through initiatives like vital parks for all and  
3 Let's Green NYC, we've invested in a future of our  
4 parks, strengthened our commitment to sustainability,  
5 and expanded opportunities for all New Yorkers to  
6 enjoy the benefits of nature and recreation.

7 We also made historic progress in public safety  
8 at our pools and beaches, negotiating the first  
9 meaningful changes to the lifeguard contract in 40  
10 years to strengthen our management, recruitment and  
11 coordination of the lifeguard corp. Since the start  
12 of this administration, we have delivered  
13 transformative park improvement projects at nearly  
14 500 park sites with hundreds more capital projects  
15 actively underway.

16 We have ensured our parks are cleaner, greener,  
17 and more welcoming than ever before. Work that will  
18 leave a lasting impact on the city we all love. I  
19 want to thank Mayor Adams for granting me the  
20 incredible privilege of leading this agency and the  
21 opportunity to work with each of you to continue  
22 improving our parks and open spaces for all New  
23 Yorkers. Thank you for the opportunity to testify  
24 today. We would now be happy to answer any questions  
25 that you may have.

1  
2 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you Commissioner. It  
3 has been great working with you. We've had a real  
4 partnership and I think because of that partnership  
5 we've managed to get a lot done so it's been great  
6 working together. I want to jump right in. I don't  
7 want to take up too much time and hand it over to the  
8 Chair here but questions about some new needs.  
9 Executive Plan includes \$825,000 for the repair of  
10 six log loaders. It's our understanding that the  
11 city is currently engaged in a law suit with the  
12 manufacturer to recoup the money that was spent on  
13 the repairs of those log loaders. Could you tell us  
14 about that?

15 SUE DONOGHUE: Thank you Council Member for the  
16 question. Due to the fact that this is active  
17 litigation, there's very little comment that I can  
18 make on this topic but I can assure that you know  
19 Parks is all city rules and regulations for  
20 purchasing equipment and other goods. We work with  
21 DCAS, other relevant entities but that's about all I  
22 can say at this point.

23 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay, uhm, the executive  
24 plan; you mentioned the Office of Marine Debris  
25

2 disposal. Does the department have a goal for how  
3 many boats could be or will be removed per year?

4 SUE DONOGHUE: Yes, we anticipate - thank you for  
5 the question Council Member. We anticipate removing  
6 between 80 and 100 abandoned derelict vessels every  
7 year.

8 In addition, we also anticipate removing at least  
9 500 cubic yards of large marine debris annually. So,  
10 it's been a really wonderful new division that we  
11 formed in this Administration and a lot of good  
12 working happening there.

13 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: And does the department  
14 have an idea of how many boats are currently out  
15 there waiting to be removed?

16 SUE DONOGHUE: You know anecdotally Council  
17 Member; there are several hundred abandoned derelict  
18 vessels on the city's waterways. Some of which have  
19 been specifically requested, brought to our  
20 attention. Council Members have been very active in  
21 suggesting removals. Others have been in locations  
22 that have been in historically sadly have served as  
23 marine dumping sites. So, there's an awful lot of  
24 derelict vessels. There's no doubt out there but we  
25 are attacking them as aggressively as we can.

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4 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: And does the department do  
5 this work in house or is it entirely contracted out?

6 SUE DONOGHUE: It's a combination. Anything that  
7 we can reach by land, we absolutely are doing those  
8 removals ourselves but then we also do a lot by  
9 contract.

10 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay. The executive plan  
11 includes \$8.8 million in FY25 for the Zoo Contract  
12 shortfall. As part of the contract with the city,  
13 the department fills any shortfalls that zoo's have  
14 had between expenses and revenue. How are the terms  
15 of the agreement memorialized? Is there a master  
16 contract? Is there an MOU or?

17 SUE DONOGHUE: Yes. So, thank you Council Member  
18 for the question. Parks entered into a 50 year  
19 contract with the Wildlife Conservation Society for  
20 the maintenance and operations of the three city  
21 zoo's beginning in 1980. And this contract will  
22 expire in 2030.

23 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay and how much - how  
24 much does the Parks Department budget each year for  
25 the Zoo contract shortfall?

SUE DONOGHUE: We contract- it's currently  
budgeted at \$8 million in FY26.

2 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay and I have one last  
3 question. In FY24, Parks overspent its PS budget by  
4 \$22.3 million and underspent its OTPS budget by \$21.5  
5 million. Is there a plan to realign the budget so  
6 that it more accurately reflects historical spending  
7 patterns?

8 SUE DONOGHUE: So, thank you Council Member for  
9 the question and it's really for us as an agency -  
10 it's really advantageous to make sure we retain  
11 sufficient OTPS money so that as things come up, if  
12 we need supplies or equipment, we have that funding  
13 in place but funds can always be moved from OTPS to  
14 PS. So, it's just a more functional way for us to be  
15 able to run the agency in terms of spending, making  
16 sure we have the money when we need it, where we need  
17 it so that we can buy supplies and equipment.

18 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay, I'm going to turn it  
19 over to Chair Krishnan. Thank you.

20 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: Thank you so much Chair  
21 Brannan. Thank you for your testimony Commissioner.  
22 So, just taking a step back for a second. So, we had  
23 our Preliminary Budget proposal from the Mayor. We  
24 had seen roughly about an 800 or so give or take  
25 reduction in staff because of all the cuts overtime.

2 Now with our executive budget, there are a few one  
3 shot positions restored. How does that compare to  
4 the 800 positions that we've lost because of success  
5 of cuts?

6 SUE DONOGHUE: Thank you Council Member for the  
7 question. We were pleased with the additions to our  
8 budget, which I talked about in the testimony, the  
9 second shift funding. We had money baselined for  
10 mechanics. Money for our marine debris removal  
11 division that we just talked about, so we were  
12 pleased with the additional staffing that we did  
13 receive and you know we will continue and then always  
14 at this time of year, we have a large influx of  
15 seasonal staff, it's incredibly helpful that  
16 buttresses our resources and our staffing. So, we  
17 feel like we are positioned to be able to move  
18 forward and get our work done for the summer.

19 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: Got it but where does that  
20 roughly leave us compared to the 800?

21 MATT DRURY: If I may? So the net impact, yeah  
22 with all the saving targets that have been  
23 implemented since the adoption of FY23, moving  
24 through FY26, all those saving targets, the net loss  
25

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2 will be in the 700 to 800 lines. So, that is still  
3 the case.

4 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: So, net loss of 700 lines  
5 still so unfortunately the Mayor's restorations had  
6 very little impact, the number of positions we've  
7 lost. Has the Parks Department achieved its vacancy  
8 reduction PEG target? If not, how close to the  
9 target are you all and when do you expect that you'll  
10 be able to hire without these impacts?

11 SUE DONOGHUE: So, thank you Council Member for  
12 the question. We anticipate achieving our PEG  
13 savings target via attrition through this current  
14 FY25, then we'll be transitioning to the citywide two  
15 for one replacement cycle through FY26. So,  
16 essentially by the end of FY26, we anticipate  
17 achieving our PEG savings targets.

18 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: But would that mean that  
19 the two for one essentially where you can't hire one  
20 person until two people leave, does that policy  
21 continue after the end of 2026?

22 SUE DONOGHUE: That is unknown at this point. We  
23 can't predict if that will be in place at this point.

24 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: But you are still subject  
25 to it through at least Fiscal Year 2026?

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2 SUE DONOGHUE: Yes.

3 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: So, am I correct to say  
4 still about the net loss of 700 positions but even  
5 with what's proposing in the Executive Budget, you  
6 all are still subject to a hiring limitation where  
7 you cannot hire one worker until two depart, is that  
8 fair to say?

9 SUE DONOGHUE: It's through uhm, end of FY25 that  
10 we will be meeting our attrition PEG but then in  
11 FY26, yes. We will be transitioning to that citywide  
12 two for one replacement cycle through FY26.

13 MATT DRURY: So, I'll add that the 700 figure  
14 accounts for that, if that makes any sense, so it's  
15 not on top of - that's inclusive of.

16 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: Right, right, my point is  
17 so even if you hit your PEG or you know reduction  
18 targets, if the Parks Department wanted to hire to  
19 fill the 700 lost positions, they would not be able  
20 to hire one position unless two workers leave the  
21 department. Is that accurate?

22 SUE DONOGHUE: That is accurate and that's  
23 citywide. We do have certain positions that are  
24 exempt from that two for one hiring, PEP, public  
25 programs, a couple things like that that are exempt

2 from that two for one but yes, otherwise that is the  
3 case.

4 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: But city parks workers are  
5 not exempt from that right?

6 SUE DONOGHUE: Right, if they're not PEP, public  
7 programs and I thought there was something else,  
8 yeah.

9 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: Urban Park Rangers are not  
10 exempt from that. Far Street, not exempt from that.

11 SUE DONOGHUE: Right, yeah.

12 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: And what methods does the  
13 agency use to increase the pool of applicants for  
14 full time and seasonal positions, given these really  
15 unacceptable limitations that you all are under from  
16 City Hall.

17 SUE DONOGHUE: So, we have a very active and  
18 aggressive recruitment process. For one, I mean, for  
19 seasonal positions we're fortunate. We have a lot of  
20 people who return every year to the Parks Department.  
21 When we can, when we have open positions at the end  
22 of a season we're often filling those positions with  
23 seasonal workers in order to maintain that  
24 continuity.  
25

2 But we also participate in job fairs, DCAS is  
3 consistently running job fairs that we participate  
4 in. We do a lot of advertising, recruitment, when  
5 and where we can across the city.

6 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: And we spoke a bit before  
7 about the positions that are on one shot or temporary  
8 one year lines. Our urban park rangers for example,  
9 but this is why the Council pushes every year to  
10 baseline and expand the number of urban park rangers,  
11 PEP officers. Do you believe that it is crucial to  
12 the operations of the department for these positions  
13 to be baselined and expanded?

14 SUE DONOGHUE: We are - thank you for the  
15 question. We are uhm, we were pleased with the  
16 funding we did receive and to know now at this point  
17 that those one shots have been funded. They are  
18 incredibly important to the agency and we uhm,  
19 anticipate that you know these positions and  
20 continuing these positions will have an enormous  
21 beneficial impact for the agency.

22 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: And of course, having  
23 these positions be permanent, uhm lines, would be  
24 more beneficial to the agency then having them be on  
25 temporary lines right?

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2 SUE DONOGHUE: The uhm decision to baseline or do  
3 one shots is not ours. It's at the OMB level.

4 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: Right, uhm, now even if  
5 the one shots were restored in the Executive Plan,  
6 the Parks Department only has 70 PEP, fewer than 20  
7 urban park rangers and 40 forestry staff per borough.  
8 Let me repeat that again. 70 PEP officers, fewer  
9 than 20 urban park rangers and 40 forestry staff per  
10 borough in the city.

11 The investments we called for in the budget  
12 response were only partially a fraction of them that  
13 because our response and our vision was much more  
14 extensive. And the reality of all of this is that we  
15 need far more staff and we need permanent staff.  
16 What would be the impact of funding or not funding  
17 the Council's request? When we call for permanent  
18 baseline positions, we call for a much greater  
19 expansion of each of these roles. What would be the  
20 impact and if you don't have those numbers, how do  
21 you all move forward with the operations and the city  
22 given these numbers per borough?

23 SUE DONOGHUE: Thank you Council Member for the  
24 question and I appreciate it. So, we agree that our  
25 PEP officers play such a critical role and helping to

2 enforce park rules and to be a visible presence in  
3 our parks and what we do - the way that we deploy our  
4 PEP staff that we do have is based on where to do it  
5 as equitably as we can per borough and to identify  
6 areas of greatest need. We also have a roving crew  
7 that we deploy to different areas across the city  
8 when and where they are needed.

9 We're incredible proud of how dedicated our PEP  
10 officers are and the work that they do in our parks.  
11 We also maintain a very important partnership with  
12 PD, so it's always a combination of our PEP officers  
13 and NYPD that is helping us to enhance safety and  
14 ensure that there's a feeling of safety in our parks,  
15 so it's a very important partnership, that role of  
16 keeping our parks safe and we'll continue to do that  
17 with the staff that we have.

18 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: And I appreciate both your  
19 leadership and all the Parks workers and their work  
20 every day and every park in our borough but the fact  
21 of the matter is it continues to be shocking to me  
22 that City Hall and OMB are only funding temporary  
23 lines despite how we have repeatedly called attention  
24 to the lack of staff and funding for our parks  
25 department.

2 In response to Mayor's Executive Budget calls for  
3 these funding of temporary lines but doesn't actually  
4 change the game and increase the number of Parks  
5 workers in any of these lines per borough. I  
6 understand that that's not your call but that is this  
7 Administrations, this City Halls call. It really is  
8 shocking to me because you look at 40 forestry staff  
9 per borough for example. I don't know how you manage  
10 a borough at all. I know you all do great work but  
11 it's far less than what you need for the parks across  
12 each borough.

13 I want to break down each of these lines and  
14 follow up on some of the things that we touched on in  
15 our preliminary budget hearing. So for PEP officers  
16 in particular, what is the current budget and actual  
17 headcount for PEP officers?

18 SUE DONOGHUE: So, the budgeted tax levy  
19 headcount for the PEP division team is 369 with an  
20 active headcount of 344 PEP officers.

21 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: And what steps does the  
22 agency take to increase retention for PEP officers?  
23 Because again, that's about 60 PEP officers per  
24 borough. How are you all doing what you can to  
25 retain those PEP officers?

2 SUE DONOGHUE: Absolutely and thank you, that's  
3 an important question and we are keenly focused on  
4 PEP recruitment and retention strategies. They can  
5 be used to help motivate and retain our employees.  
6 We aim to recruit and hire a talented and diverse  
7 pool of PEP officers and we absolutely welcome  
8 dialogue with the Council and the larger community to  
9 help us make that happen.

10 Our recruitment efforts include attending job  
11 fairs, handing out flyers and also in terms of  
12 retention, we have done a number of different things.  
13 We have an internal moral committee, a working group  
14 that meets regularly. We have annual PEP command  
15 meetings to improve communication, build  
16 relationships, try and detect issues before they  
17 escalate, boost confidence in our officers and  
18 leadership. We have a platform we put in place for  
19 employee feedback. We've also implemented not just  
20 for PEP but in our agency something called stay  
21 interviews where we meet with folks, meet with our  
22 PEP officers. We're highlighting this in Staten  
23 Island to really get a sense of you know why you're  
24 staying, what is making it uh assist a job that  
25 you're staying at, so that we can focus on

2 discovering trends, implementing those strategies is  
3 going to make it so that uhm, we have a better  
4 retention rate for our PEP officers.

5 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: And just thinking about  
6 their work schedule, so there's about 60 officers per  
7 borough. How many acres of park is each officer  
8 assigned to cover? Are there any parks that are not  
9 assigned to cover?

10 SUE DONOGHUE: We don't break off the PEP  
11 assignments by acreage. As I said earlier, what  
12 we're doing is we're deploying them as equitably as  
13 we can across the boroughs and then we are moving our  
14 officers based on need. If there is an increase in  
15 illegal vending. If there's an increase in illegal  
16 dumping. We're moving our officers when and where we  
17 can where they're needed most.

18 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: And are there parks that  
19 don't get coverage at all?

20 SUE DONOGHUE: There wouldn't be parks that don't  
21 get coverage at all. As I said, they are covered on  
22 a rotating basis. We're trying to in each borough  
23 cover as many parks as possible.

2 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: What's the optimal number  
3 you think you would need to ensure adequate coverage  
4 across the park system?

5 SUE DONOGHUE: I don't think we have an optimal  
6 number that would say we recognize and appreciate  
7 your recognition of the importance of our PEP  
8 officers and right now, the way they're deployed is  
9 you know strategic so we can get to the areas that we  
10 need but I don't think we have you know I could state  
11 like an optimal number.

12 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: Let's move to Urban Park  
13 Rangers. You know they provide an essential service  
14 to our city. They were created in 1979. They have  
15 to connect New Yorkers with their parks. They help  
16 New Yorkers of all agencies understand and expand  
17 their knowledge about the history of parks, the  
18 wildlife there, the plants but sadly the funding for  
19 most of these positions again is not permanent and  
20 urban park rangers live with the uncertainty that the  
21 funding for their positions will not be renewed each  
22 year.

23 That is no way to live. It is no way to support  
24 workers who are serving our city every day who are  
25 concerned also not only about their jobs but how to

1 care for their families, pay their rent, pay their  
2 mortgage, pay for childcare. And so, it's shocking  
3 to me again that this mayor who claims to care deeply  
4 about not only public safety and quality of life but  
5 supposedly for making our city more affordable for  
6 workers would not do more to ensure that the parks  
7 workers have what they need to be able to afford  
8 living in the city to support their families.  
9 Supporting our parks budget is fundamentally a  
10 workers issue. What is the current budgeted  
11 headcount, an actual headcount for urban park rangers  
12 in New York City?  
13

14 SUE DONOGHUE: So the current budgeted headcount  
15 is 89 total positions and the actually headcount is  
16 92.

17 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: 89 - so about 90 right and  
18 that's about 18 urban park rangers per borough,  
19 right?

20 SUE DONOGHUE: Hmm, hmm.

21 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: If it were not for the  
22 Council fighting to reinstate the funding each year  
23 for urban park rangers, how many urban park rangers  
24 would cease to be employed by the Parks Department.  
25

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4 SUE DONOGHUE: So, on the current FY25 budget for  
5 89 urban park ranger lines, 50 are one shot funded,  
6 however, this one shot funding was renewed in the  
7 FY26 executive budget. So we know that these lines  
8 will remain in place.

9 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: So, I just want to be  
10 clear about this right, 90 urban park rangers across  
11 the city, 50 more than half are funded on temporary  
12 funding that the Council every year fights and  
13 restores. That means more than half of these jobs,  
14 workers who care for our parks and their wildlife who  
15 support their families do not know every July 1<sup>st</sup>  
16 whether they will be employed. Does the Parks  
17 Department support the Council in a push for the  
18 Administration to baseline these positions?

19 SUE DONOGHUE: We are very appreciative of the  
20 Council's previous advocacy, support and funding but  
21 I can say that the parks is committed to delivering  
22 on our mission to offer vibrant parks for all New  
23 Yorkers with whatever resources are provided. One  
24 shot funding items are included in our agencies  
25 budget every year and help provide our agency with  
the resources needed to fulfill our mission. This  
funding provides tremendous value and the agency

1 staff serving in those lines we know are hugely  
2 important as you say to our team and to the agency.

3  
4 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: Absolutely and we at the  
5 Council have made clear every year to City Hall given  
6 how important these lines are, given that these are  
7 workers jobs on the line, the fact that we have to  
8 negotiate them every year down to the wire to make  
9 sure those jobs continue is not acceptable. What is  
10 the typical daily schedule for an urban park ranger?

11 SUE DONOGHUE: So, the primary focus and some of  
12 what you talked about already, the primary focus for  
13 our urban park rangers each day is one, connecting  
14 New Yorkers to the natural world, their environmental  
15 education and outdoor recreation programs, protecting  
16 New York City's natural areas by patrolling and  
17 enforcing rules and regulations and then also  
18 importantly protecting New York City's wildlife and  
19 natural resources by responding, they respond to  
20 reports when there is a sick or injured animal or  
21 wildlife within Parks. So, their three primary  
22 duties along with related administrative work that's  
23 really what makes up a rangers typical day.

24 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: And we're very grateful to  
25 them for that service. I want to include my

2 questions for now with focusing on lifeguards. You  
3 mentioned full beach season is about to start,  
4 Memorial day is around the corner. How, where - my  
5 understanding is we need about 1,600 lifeguards give  
6 or take to fully staff our pools and beaches. Where  
7 are we? Is that the correct number and where are we  
8 in relation to that?

9 SUE DONOGHUE: Yes, thanks for the question.

10 It's not 1,600. It's 1,400 is the number we have put  
11 out there and that's really not to fully staff.

12 That's in order to have a second shift. So, we have  
13 been really pleased with the fact and we've seen an  
14 increase in our lifeguard numbers year over year and  
15 it's a testament to the incredible work of the team  
16 behind me and the First Deputy Commissioner and her  
17 team. Last year we got up to 930 lifeguards and we  
18 had a 45 percent increase in new recruits. Again, a  
19 testament to the incredible work that's been done.

20 We need about 1,000 lifeguards to fully open our  
21 pools and beaches. We have all faith that we're  
22 going to get there this year. Again, there's been so  
23 much work done on recruitment, on outreach to the  
24 Lifeguard Corp and the 1,400 number is so that which  
25 we absolutely want to get to and it would get us

1  
2 closer to where we were Pre-Covid. It would get us  
3 to be able to have a second shift. So, an early  
4 morning shift or a late afternoon shift. But the  
5 number really and to fully open our pools and beaches  
6 is 1,000.

7 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: So, 1,000 and 1,400. Can  
8 you just breakdown, if you're at - what are the two  
9 shifts that the 1,400 would cover?

10 SUE DONOGHUE: Sure, so our pools and beaches are  
11 - pools are 10 to 7 and beaches are 11 - help me out  
12 here. 10 to 6 for beaches, 11 to 7 for pools. And  
13 so, if you know last year as I said, we got to 930.  
14 At 1,000 we can open all of our pools and beaches to  
15 that one shift and be able to fully open pools and  
16 beaches. We did that last year. We've been able to  
17 do that the last couple years, even in a very  
18 difficult hiring environment and a national lifeguard  
19 shortage. We were unique in our capabilities in  
20 being able to do that versus other municipalities  
21 that we're closing pools and beaches. So, incredibly  
22 proud of that work we've done.

23 So, 1,000 we can be fully open. The 1,400 would  
24 allow us to have an early morning shift for lap swim  
25 say or for senior swim. What we did the last couple

1 years and again thanks to our incredible public  
2 programs division. We incorporated that, a lot of  
3 that program and we had senior swim in a number of  
4 our pools during that one shift. So, we worked  
5 really hard to continue to have some of that great  
6 programming, lap swim and senior swim but with that  
7 1,000 number, we're able to fully open our pools and  
8 beaches.  
9

10 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: Got it and is senior swim  
11 coming back this summer?

12 SUE DONOGHUE: We hope so. We did it last year.  
13 It was incredibly popular. The seniors at Astoria  
14 and many other places just love that programming and  
15 we know how important it is, that's why we worked  
16 really hard to make sure we could do it.

17 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: How are we on track to  
18 getting back to the original three days of two hours  
19 a day for senior swim? Is that coming back or no?

20 SUE DONOGHUE: You mean during the - during the  
21 one shift having that? We are absolutely planning to  
22 do that.

23 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: Okay, great. And just  
24 going back to I'm just going to get a clear sense,  
25

2 where are we numbers wise now compared to the 1,400  
3 that we need?

4 SUE DONOGHUE: So, we're not able to tell you  
5 that yet because we are in the phase of we have  
6 people in training. We won't know that number yet  
7 until we get through - we had qualifying to 68  
8 different qualifying tests all across the city.  
9 We've now moved into the training phase, which I'm  
10 really pleased to report. We expanded those training  
11 opportunities. It used to be just in one location in  
12 Manhattan.

13 We now have training locations in four out of the  
14 five boroughs enabling ease of getting to training  
15 for lifeguards. We know we've made it a whole lot  
16 easier. So, they're in that 16 week training program  
17 and we need to get through that training cycle and  
18 then we'll know where we are in terms of numbers.  
19 Have also again thanks to the really hard work of the  
20 team, added an accelerated program, a shorter program  
21 that's targeted towards college students and  
22 returning lifeguards, so we can offer both the  
23 intensive training, the accelerated training, all  
24 with the idea of really increasing those numbers.  
25 And as I said, we had a 45 percent increase in new

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2 recruits last year. We're looking to meet or exceed  
3 that goal this year.

4 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: So, that was my question.  
5 I understand you don't know the exact number yet.  
6 How is it compared generally to the number of -

7 SUE DONOGHUE: We're ahead of where we were.  
8 We're really feeling confident we'll hit our goals.

9 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: My last couple questions.  
10 Just, how many retention bonuses were paid to  
11 lifeguards who stayed through the peak season?

12 SUE DONOGHUE: We had approximately 600 returning  
13 lifeguards received this bonus for summer of 2024.

14 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: And I want to also thank  
15 you, First Deputy Commissioner Rodriguez-Rosa for  
16 your work to expand, the testing and training site.  
17 Is there thought to expanding them further to create  
18 more sites across the boroughs to make it more  
19 accessible for young students in particular who could  
20 be good for lifeguard positions?

21 SUE DONOGHUE: We worked really hard to do that  
22 this year and as I said, I'm proud of the fact that  
23 we have expanded training locations in four out of  
24 the five boroughs. We'll absolutely look to continue  
25 to do that.

2 We know that it makes a big difference and makes  
3 it much more accessible for our teams and folks to be  
4 able to get to this training, which is what we want,  
5 so absolutely we're going to continue to work on  
6 that.

7 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: Thanks. Those are my  
8 questions for now. I'll turn it back over to the  
9 Chair.

10 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you Chair. We've  
11 also been joined by Council Members Narcisse, Ayala,  
12 Farias, Menin, Williams and Lee. We'll start with  
13 questions from Ung followed by Brewer.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER UNG: Thank you Chair and thank  
15 you Commissioner for the years of partnership. I  
16 just have two questions. The first question is about  
17 the capital funding. I and along with my colleagues  
18 have you know committed significant capital funding  
19 to all parks over the years and I think I will speak  
20 for myself, there is frustrations, the high cost  
21 estimate and the slow pace that's getting done. So,  
22 the two in my district, the Eastern Queens Greenway,  
23 it hasn't even gone to the stage of the community  
24 input yet and I funded it back from the parks my  
25 first year and that has yet to break ground.

2 Has Parks done an internal review or audit to see  
3 why that's the case? Because I asked another agency  
4 this question and then you know there was a couple of  
5 laws that he was explaining that had to be in  
6 compliance which delays certain capital processes so  
7 I was wondering if you know Parks had done the same?

8 SUE DONOGHUE: Yes, thank you Council Member for  
9 the question and we can look at the specific project  
10 that you mentioned and get back to you. I can tell  
11 you that the parks department in conjunction with the  
12 Administration has worked really hard on capital  
13 process reform and looking at every single element of  
14 that capital process for where we can achieve both  
15 savings, getting projects done quicker and more  
16 efficiently. It is, there's no doubt, a complicated  
17 process. It requires permits from other agencies  
18 that can sometimes take a long time but we're working  
19 really hard to do everything we can to make sure that  
20 that capital process is speeded up as much as  
21 possible.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER UNG: No thank you. I think I'm  
23 asking this question to see you know the future even  
24 though you won't be here. If City Council could work  
25 with Parks in terms of getting this process you know

1  
2 quicker, which I think will be beneficial for  
3 everybody.

4 SUE DONOGHUE: We agree and would appreciate any  
5 and all help on that absolutely.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER UNG: And my second question is  
7 about the Blue Bell project. I know that's  
8 administered by DEP but the recent pull back of the  
9 funding from the Administration, do you see that  
10 impacting parks?

11 MATT DRURY: Federal impacts, you mean federal  
12 impacts.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER UNG: Yes.

14 SUE DONOGHUE: So, we work very closely with DEP  
15 on their Blue Bell program, absolutely. I couldn't  
16 uhm answer right now in terms of the impacts on DEP's  
17 program but at this point, we're not seeing impacts  
18 from that but we can certainly you know circle with  
19 DEP and get back to you on that.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER UNG: Okay great, thank you.

21 SUE DONOGHUE: Yeah.

22 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay questions from Council  
23 Member Brewer followed by Hanks.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Thank you. Water  
25 fountains, a hearing recently, I think it was a

2 different topic but water fountains came up in the  
3 sense that a lot of them are broken. Either do you  
4 have like a database that's of the broken ones? How  
5 do you handle them? We obviously have some  
6 participatory budget, money that will go towards new  
7 ones but when I brought that up, there was a long  
8 list of uh oh we have so many broken. How are you  
9 handling that?

10 SUE DONOGHUE: Thank you Council Member for the  
11 question and we were just talking about this. We  
12 have over 6,000 water activations that we will be  
13 committed to having done by the end of this week, an  
14 enormous, enormous job for our plumbers across the  
15 five boroughs. We do maintain a database. We do  
16 look carefully at where we're having challenges. A  
17 lot of times, the water fountain is broken. It's  
18 because of you know early freeze or pipes being  
19 broken but it is something that we take very  
20 seriously and if there's a specific one that you're  
21 referring to or a specific area, let us know and  
22 we'll definitely take a look at it.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay, so no what you're  
24 saying is that you have a process now that you're  
25 fixing those.

2 SUE DONOGHUE: Yeah, so absolutely.

3 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: I have a long list; I  
4 will get it to you.

5 SUE DONOGHUE: Okay, thank you.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Bathrooms, I mean, I know  
7 in the last hearing preliminary you talked about what  
8 it Oregon or Portland or someplace like that?

9 SUE DONOGHUE: The Portland Loo, yes.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Whatever but there's  
11 still a whole bunch of the ones that need renovation.

12 SUE DONOGHUE: Yeah.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: \$13 million, \$5 million  
14 and so on. Do we have a plan for that? I'm doing  
15 the best I can but that's a lot of money for per  
16 bathroom. What's the plan for that?

17 SUE DONOGHUE: Yes, absolutely are you saying  
18 that \$13 million per bathroom?

19 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: One bathroom is \$13  
20 million of Riverside Park yeah.

21 SUE DONOGHUE: Yeah, so that's an exceptional,  
22 that's a rare occurrence.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: I have \$6 million, \$9  
24 million, \$5 million.

25

2 SUE DONOGHUE: Yeah, yeah, our average price of a  
3 bathrooms is running about \$3.5 million. There are  
4 cases where either because of the utility lines or  
5 because of need to elevate or accessibility issues,  
6 they can be more expensive, absolutely but we have  
7 done a number of things to look at bringing down the  
8 prices of bathrooms. You referenced Portland Loo,  
9 the reason why we've explored other options like that  
10 is specifically to bring down the price of our  
11 bathroom. So, we've looked at things like prefab  
12 buildings, trailers, a number of different options so  
13 that to bring down the price and be able to do it  
14 more quickly.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: In my case, they already  
16 exist so they're either - and sometimes they're  
17 landmarked. So, \$13 million is it and so I'm just  
18 saying where there are that kind of bathroom, I would  
19 love to have some discussion about what we can do.  
20 We're all trying but -

21 SUE DONOGHUE: Absolutely.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Less than 5.9.

23 SUE DONOGHUE: Yes, well within this year, we  
24 announced a Better Bathrooms Initiative. \$150  
25 million that's going to renovating a huge number of

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2 restrooms. It's creating - the number is 46 new ones  
3 and renovating 36. It's 100 new bathrooms that we're  
4 doing with funding that was allocated by the Mayor's  
5 Office. So, the Parks Department is the largest - it  
6 maintains the largest number of public bathrooms in  
7 the city. Huge, huge responsibility that we take  
8 seriously. Over 600 public bathrooms and as I said,  
9 we have received funding and are going to be  
10 renovating or building an enormous number of new  
11 ones.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay the [INAUDIBLE  
13 03:41:43] bathroom is fabulous, just FYI. Finally,  
14 the question of the 79 Street Bow Basin, I know that  
15 that's being renovated. Do you have the timing on  
16 that and when it will be done? And then I would like  
17 to see liveaboards return, people who live on their  
18 boats. Is that something that you support?

19 SUE DONOGHUE: Thank you for the question and -

20 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Nate doesn't like them.

21 SUE DONOGHUE: Nate doesn't like them?

22 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: No he doesn't. Nate  
23 doesn't like them but I like them so I'm for the  
24 liveaboards.

25

2 SUE DONOGHUE: We will take note of that and  
3 relay that. In terms of timeline for that there is  
4 uhm I know that let's see, there is \$90 million in  
5 Mayoral and FEMA funding has been allocated for full  
6 drudging and reconstruction with an anticipated 2028  
7 reopening.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: 2028, okay thank you and  
9 then just quickly on playgrounds, you know I have a  
10 bill that says the sum of the school playgrounds that  
11 are not open now. We have great ones that are  
12 jointly operated, trust of public land. Is that  
13 something that you'll support? Obviously the money  
14 would be needed for the custodians at the schools but  
15 it does seem to me that what's another way to get  
16 more open space would be to open up some of those  
17 playgrounds. Is that something that you're  
18 supporting?

19 SUE DONOGHUE: Absolutely Council Member. In  
20 fact, I was uhm, you know at the Parks Department  
21 during the Bloomberg Administration and the school  
22 yards to playgrounds was an important element of  
23 PlaNYC and we opened over 200 schools yards to  
24 playgrounds to the public.

2 I know first hand how beneficial they are to  
3 communities. It was in the Mayor's State of the City  
4 to open some additional school yards to playgrounds.  
5 We are all for capturing any and all public open  
6 space that we can to provide more opportunities for  
7 New Yorkers.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Do you have any funding  
9 allocated for that because obviously the cost is for  
10 the custodian.

11 SUE DONOGHUE: It's the maintenance cost exactly  
12 for opening and closing for the custodians. That  
13 does not go in our budget. That goes in DOE's  
14 budget.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: DOE, okay and then  
16 finally trees, I know that we have - you kindly  
17 answered that the funding is there for the trees, I  
18 understand that but is there some consideration, I  
19 know we might - there's a lot of concern about  
20 getting trees very far into the future because we  
21 can't ask for a tree now, it has to go per  
22 neighborhood. Is that something - is that going to  
23 save money or why is that - people are very upset  
24 about their tree, maybe like three generations from  
25 now or something.

2 SUE DONOGHUE: So, that is something that we've  
3 worked hard at is our neighborhood tree planting  
4 strategy and it's really about two things. It's  
5 about equity and it's about efficiency. It was the  
6 case that we were responding - when we were  
7 responding to individual tree planting requests,  
8 certain neighborhoods who knew how to do that would  
9 get those trees.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: I know how to do it.

11 SUE DONOGHUE: Yeah, I know you do and your  
12 neighborhood may but other neighborhoods across the  
13 city maybe didn't have as much information. We would  
14 love that but this way you don't have to teach them.  
15 We are going to - we have a strategy in place whereby  
16 we're going to be determining based on heat  
17 vulnerability, where the trees are needed most. We  
18 want that urban canopy to expand across the five  
19 boroughs. We know it's critically important for  
20 peoples quality of life and so, it is both from an  
21 equity standpoint to make sure that every  
22 neighborhood is going to see new trees and then also  
23 for efficiency.

24 We want to make sure that our contractors are  
25 using the funding as efficiently as possible and

2 they're not running to many different locations.

3 They are going to be focusing on a full block  
4 strategy. It's how we do our pruning today, and what  
5 it means is that an entire block will be planted and  
6 not only planted but we'll be removing tree stumps.  
7 If there's an area that's not plantable, we'll fill  
8 it or we'll work with the community to figure out  
9 what's best there. So, our new tree planting,  
10 neighborhood tree planting strategy is really about  
11 equity and efficiency.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: And when is the final  
13 date to have all these neighborhoods done? Do you  
14 have one?

15 SUE DONOGHUE: It is every neighborhood will see  
16 - every community board. The way that it's laid out  
17 is every community board will see planting on a  
18 cycle.

19 MATT DRURY: So, the overall timeframe. So, in  
20 nine years for the first time in the city's history,  
21 get the funding the place and a plan in place to we  
22 will be planting trees in every viable spot under our  
23 jurisdiction in a nine year timeframe. And then as  
24 the Commissioner was just noting that some portion of  
25 every community board will be receiving some trees

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2 along that way throughout the course of the program,  
3 roughly at a minimum every three years or so.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay, so every three  
5 years people might see trees.

6 MATT DRURY: In a given community district.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: If there's a nine year -  
8 politically that does not work.

9 MATT DRURY: Well -

10 SUE DONOGHUE: For the communities though and  
11 making sure we're equitable in planting our trees,  
12 we're hoping it's workable.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Policies versus equity.  
14 Alright, thank you.

15 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Question from Hanks  
16 followed by Louis.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER HANKS: Thank you Chair. Thank  
18 you Commissioner Donoghue. We will definitely miss  
19 you. You've been an incredible partner. So, as you  
20 know there's been a lot of controversy behind the  
21 surrounding of the reopening of the roadway in Silver  
22 Lake Park in Staten Island and I know that these are  
23 things that we've been back and forth in discussing.  
24 So as a compromise you know, we just want to confirm  
25 for the record that the Parks Department will be

1 closing Silverlake Roadway on weekends and you know  
2 we feel that restoring the roadway to its pre-COVID  
3 use is a workable balance and we really appreciate  
4 the Parks Department to be working with us on that  
5 but when can we expect the weekend closures to begin?  
6

7 SUE DONOGHUE: Thank you Council Member for that  
8 question and for your partnership on this and so many  
9 issues. We very much understand the importance of  
10 closing on the weekends and it's something that we  
11 are absolutely working towards. I can give you that  
12 commitment for sure.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER HANKS: Thank you. So, is there  
14 going to be any budgetary or personnel issues? You  
15 know we've been getting questions as to is it - will  
16 it be before this summer? Will it be after? We kind  
17 of want to dig into the timing of that or some sort  
18 of estimation.

19 SUE DONOGHUE: Yeah, we're going to look to do  
20 that as soon as absolutely feasible. You're right,  
21 it's a resource issue on our part to be able to have  
22 the staffing available in the mornings and in the  
23 late evenings to facilitate that opening and closing  
24 but with seasonal staffing coming onboard, we  
25 anticipate that we'll be able to make that happen

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4 sooner rather than later and as soon as we finalize  
5 that we will be in touch for sure.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER HANKS: Thank you so much.

7 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Council Member Louis  
8 followed by Paladino.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER LOUIS: Thank you Chair and  
10 Commissioner Donoghue. It's been a pleasure working  
11 with you and your team. Wishing you all the best in  
12 your next endeavors. I'm sure you'll be around. Two  
13 quick questions.

14 Regarding the Second Shift program and the  
15 additional 100 hot spots receiving Second Shift  
16 cleaning services, I wanted to know how are these  
17 sites selected and what public facing criteria are  
18 used and will Second Shift resources help cover  
19 maintenance shortfalls in high need areas such as  
20 East Flatbush and flatlands? And I have a quick  
21 question on capital improvements. Many capital  
22 projects in playgrounds like Tildon Playground and  
23 Scarts Field in Marine Park are left unaddressed for  
24 years due to needing a large scale capital project  
25 instead of incremental improvements. So, I wanted to  
know what mitigation or expedited procurement  
strategies are being considered to prevent prolonged

1 delays for routine but essential park upgrades in  
2  
3 FY26?

4 SUE DONOGHUE: Okay thank you Council Member for  
5 your question. For the first part, in terms of our  
6 second shift sites, those are chosen. The  
7 additional, now 100 additional sites were chosen  
8 based on two factors. One is, we have an extensive  
9 rating system. Our PIP ratings that is something  
10 that our team and our maintenance and operation folks  
11 review every single month and we look at those  
12 ratings very closely to see how different parks are  
13 performing. Where we have issues, where parks are  
14 falling behind. So, in picking out those 100  
15 additional sites, we're looking and using those PIP  
16 ratings as well as anecdotal evidence from our staff  
17 on the ground to say you know, this is a very busy  
18 barbeque area. We're seeing it every weekend. We  
19 can't keep up so it's that combination of anecdotal  
20 plus our PIP data that drove those decisions of the  
21 additional 100 sites. And then in terms of the  
22 capital work, you're absolutely right. We know that  
23 we have sites that it's not just a - it's not a quick  
24 fix, it's a capital project.

2 And as I said in my testimony, we now have a  
3 \$10.5 billion capital budget. It's extraordinary for  
4 the Parks Department and yet still not enough in some  
5 ways.

6 So, we are looking very closely as I said earlier  
7 at ways that we can expedite that capital process,  
8 working with City Hall, working with our sister  
9 agencies, working on things like expediting processes  
10 with DOB. Working with DEP. There's permitting.  
11 You know to move a capital project forward; it  
12 involves a myriad of different city agencies. So,  
13 this administration has been focused on this capital  
14 reform taskforce and we believe that you know every  
15 week, every month we can reduce that time frame.  
16 It's important so, working on how we can systematize  
17 or shorten the length of approval processes or those  
18 kind of things. So, we're very much laser focused on  
19 capital process reform but it still is we know can be  
20 - can take a long time.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER LOUIS: It will be good to know if  
22 East Flatbush and Flatlands, being they fall in high  
23 need areas, if they fall within the criteria of the  
24 PIP but we can have that conversation after.

2 SUE DONOGHUE: They absolutely do. Every single  
3 park in our system falls within our PIP reading  
4 system. The other thing that we have done is through  
5 our Vital Parks for All initiative. We have mapped  
6 every single asset in our parks system. So, every  
7 tree, basketball court, playground and that helps us  
8 to target and identify those areas of high need that  
9 haven't had investment or that need investment. So,  
10 looking at across the system, using data like that,  
11 we're able to pinpoint areas where we want to focus  
12 our capital.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER FARIAS: Thank you so much. Thank  
14 you Chairs.

15 SUE DONOGHUE: Thank you.

16 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Council Member Narcisse  
17 followed by Salaam.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: Good afternoon and  
19 thank you for being here Commissioner. We appreciate  
20 you. We love Parks, you know the Chairs now. He  
21 loves Parks.

22 So, in the Mayor's Campaign, he was supposed to  
23 allocate one percent of the budget right? And if you  
24 get that \$500 million extra, what would you do?

1  
2 Where would you allocate it? Which area of our needs  
3 that this money will go to?

4 SUE DONOGHUE: Thank you so much for the question  
5 and we would have no trouble allocating that money  
6 for sure Council Member and as I just mentioned with  
7 our Vital for All analysis that we did and with the  
8 data mapping, it helps us to target areas of high  
9 need, areas that have been under invested in. We are  
10 and want to be very, very specific in targeting our  
11 investments to areas that are most needed and we  
12 would use that data analysis to both target our  
13 resources. I mentioned the PIP ratings earlier, that  
14 helps us uncover areas that are consistently failing  
15 where we need to dedicate more staffing. You know  
16 with the 100, the additional 100 second shift sites,  
17 we were able to target areas of high needs, so we  
18 continue that work and put the resources where  
19 they're most needed.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: We're wishing, we're  
21 hoping and hopefully we get it. Tree pruning is one  
22 of the most common complaints my office has been  
23 receiving right. Residents regularly raise concerns  
24 about over grown or dangerous limbs, especially after  
25 storms. Do you believe the Department is being

adequately funded to meet it's annual pruning goals?

And how are you prioritizing neighborhoods like my neighborhood where the need is especially high?

SUE DONOGHUE: Thank you for the question. We have really an outstanding team that's recognized across the country for our urban forestry management and we have - we follow a very specific tree risk management strategy and so, if there is a 311 complaint about a tree or concern about a tree, we have inspectors that go out and look at those trees and inspect those trees. And in terms of pruning, we are funded - our tree pruning is funded on a seven year cycle. It is the industry standard and so, the combination of our inhouse team, our inspectors and the procedures and processes we follow and the pruning contracts that we use, we feel like we are very much focused on tree risk management and addressing the areas of high need across the city, in your Council District and in districts across the city.

COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: Where are we with the playground in Marine Park? You know I have to ask that question because everyone calling me for that.

1  
2 SUE DONOGHUE: The playground in Marine Park. If  
3 you tell me the name and the specifics, we will  
4 absolutely get you -

5 COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: There is only one kids  
6 playground and we have it in Marine Park.

7 SUE DONOGHUE: Okay.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: But I've been waiting  
9 for that forever. It was part of the project - it  
10 was a long time ago. So, I'm going to leave with  
11 that and I want to know if a park place property,  
12 they use for addressing the needs of gun violence or  
13 have a center in our community, what are the  
14 processes? What can you help me do? Because right  
15 now, I succeed area. I have a bunch of young folks  
16 standing there all the time. Gun violence is the  
17 highest in that area and I really want to plan  
18 something over there where we can get the kids off  
19 the street, so I'm looking forward to have that  
20 conversation. I know you wouldn't be able to answer  
21 all that today.

22 SUE DONOGHUE: Thank you but we're happy to have  
23 a follow up conversation on it.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: Thank you.  
25

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4 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay, Council Member Salaam  
5 followed by Menin.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER SALAAM: Thank you and good  
7 afternoon and thank you for the tremendous work that  
8 you've been doing and you know it has definitely been  
9 a pleasure to work with you as well. I have a  
10 question about the budget item with regards to Park  
11 Rangers and public safety.

12 Given the one shot nature of the \$4.1 million  
13 allocated for the 50 additional urban park rangers in  
14 Fiscal Year '26, what long term strategy does the  
15 Administration have to baseline and sustain these  
16 positions to ensure consistent park safety and  
17 programming, especially in under resourced  
18 communities like mine?

19 SUE DONOGHUE: Thank you for your question and  
20 also, thank you for recognizing the critical  
21 importance of our rangers and our park staff. We  
22 work really hard and we have a very dedicated group  
23 of park rangers and PEP staff that is very focused on  
24 areas of high need and that's how we distribute. We  
25 try and equitably distribute our park enforcement  
patrol staff where they're needed most. We were very  
happy with uhm to know that we got the one shot

1 funding. This has been the case each year that these  
2 have been funded on a one shot basis. We understand  
3 their importance.  
4

5 As I said earlier, it's also we feel it's very  
6 much a partnership with PD. We work very closely and  
7 hand and hand with PD to help ensure safety in our  
8 parks but we recognize the important role that they  
9 play, absolutely.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER SALAAM: Thank you and I wanted to  
11 ask about green infrastructure and climate  
12 resilience. With only \$690,000 in the federal funds  
13 allocated for green infrastructure storm water  
14 management, what is DPR's plan to scale up climate  
15 resilient efforts across the five boroughs,  
16 particularly in parks located in flood prone areas?

17 SUE DONOGHUE: Thank you for the question and  
18 it's something that we think about in every single  
19 capital project. We have an enormous number of green  
20 infrastructure projects right now in construction. I  
21 think it's 65 different projects right now in  
22 construction that include green infrastructure  
23 elements. We work very closely with DEP on including  
24 green infrastructure and working together. I just  
25 came this morning from an enormous resiliency project

2 on the east side of Manhattan. I was at the - uhm a  
3 park, East River Park which is a \$1.4 billion  
4 resiliency project to make sure that we are  
5 protecting that neighborhood from the impacts of  
6 climate change. Really every single project we do,  
7 we're thinking about and we are measuring what is  
8 going to be the increase in impervious surface. How  
9 are we addressing - how are we making sure that we  
10 have the greenery, the trees, the infrastructure, the  
11 green infrastructure, the drainage that's going to  
12 help us deal with the impacts of climate change.

13 I can tell you that it is in every single project  
14 we do. We're thinking about the green infrastructure  
15 element. So, our funding that we have at present,  
16 that \$10 billion, over \$10 billion in capital  
17 funding, there are green infrastructure projects  
18 throughout that. So, we're not reliant on federal  
19 money for that. That is uh, you know imperative in  
20 all of our programs, in all of our projects that we  
21 are doing.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER SALAAM: And I just have one last  
23 question regarding upgrades to parks and specifically  
24 in my district. So, my team was able to go back and  
25 review many of the necessary upgrades to parks in my

2 district. To our surprise, many of the parks have  
3 received multiple upgrades with each Council  
4 Administration. Can you help me to understand why  
5 the longevity of these repairs are not sustainable?  
6 For example, currently Young Park or Jackie Robinson  
7 Park and [INAUDIBLE 04:00:34] Park?

8 SUE DONOGHUE: So, just so I understand the  
9 question. Why the renovations that have been done  
10 are not sustainable?

11 COUNCIL MEMBER SALAAM: Yes.

12 SUE DONOGHUE: So, we work hard to make sure that  
13 our capital projects are done with care. We have  
14 good contractors but the reality is that our parks  
15 have such heavy usage and the maintenance, the  
16 ongoing usage of our parks can - they can easily be  
17 overwhelmed because of the intensity of use. And so,  
18 we work hard to make sure that we are maintaining and  
19 keeping up those sites that we've renovated but it is  
20 often the case or in some cases that just the  
21 intensity of use means that they do need to be  
22 refurbished or renovated, just because there are so  
23 many people using them and so many people outside,  
24 which is what we want but the intensity of these is  
25 quite enormous.

1  
2 COUNCIL MEMBER SALAAM: Thank you.

3 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay, we have Council  
4 Member Menin followed by Lee.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER MENIN: Thank you so much Chair  
6 and thank you Commissioner. Thank you for your  
7 service and wishing you the best in your next  
8 chapter.

9 So, I want to build it on questions that were  
10 asked by my colleagues about delays in capital  
11 construction. So, in my district, which ranks one of  
12 the lowest in terms of amount of park space, we've  
13 had real delays around Ruppert Park. You and I  
14 visited Ruppert and my concern is that DEP has now  
15 said that need a new stormwater pollution prevention  
16 plan. So, that is now causing an additional one year  
17 delay. Why aren't issues like that viewed on the  
18 front end rather than on the back end?

19 SUE DONOGHUE: Thank you Council Member for the  
20 question and it is a good one and that is something  
21 that we try really hard to look at and address but  
22 often times the reality is, until you're in  
23 construction, you just don't know what you're going  
24 to be dealing with and there is no doubt and as I  
25 said, a lot of the delays that we experience are

1 because of needing permits from other areas. The one  
2 you mentioned in terms of DEP is an important one and  
3 it can add time to projects and cost, so we work very  
4 closely - we've been working really closely with DEP  
5 to see ways that we can address some of those issues  
6 upfront, have additional funding in place for some of  
7 those issues that arise in construction but it is  
8 because these are often large multiagency projects  
9 that can be really - it can add delays.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER MENIN: So, moving forward on  
12 projects like Ruppert and similar projects in other  
13 members districts, why not have an interagency  
14 taskforce from the beginning that is meeting, that is  
15 flagging these issues and every single agency should  
16 have to sign off immediately on the front end so that  
17 we don't have these kinds of delays?

18 SUE DONOGHUE: Absolutely and we have as I said,  
19 there are capital reform process. We have looked at  
20 things like that. We actually have people they would  
21 deploy that are sitting at DEP to help to with the  
22 communication, help to identify you know problems  
23 early on. So, we're looking at all different ways  
24 that we can improve the process.

1  
2 COUNCIL MEMBER MENIN: Okay and then last  
3 question, moving to swimming. I know you had a  
4 dialogue with Chair Krishnan about the lifeguard  
5 situation and so, my question is about when are we  
6 going to see a universal swim program for second  
7 graders? Which was mandated by the bill that the  
8 Council passed last year. We know obviously that  
9 you've allocated additional \$5.5 million to expand it  
10 for additional 4,800 second graders but it's still  
11 not the universal program that was required under the  
12 legislation.

13 SUE DONOGHUE: Yes and thank you for the question  
14 and thank you for recognizing the importance of our  
15 Swim for Life program. It's something that we have  
16 for decades been very focused on and appreciate your  
17 support of it and as we know - so thank you for also  
18 recognizing we did get you know the \$5 million in  
19 funding to be able to expand and that's really,  
20 that's what it is is that it requires funding both in  
21 order to be able to have the swim instructors and all  
22 of the support staff needed to be able to train  
23 second graders to swim and the facility to  
24 accommodate that swimming. So, we were pleased,  
25 we're now up to about \$18,000 you know students,

1 individuals getting trained and swim in water safety  
2 but you know it is a matter of continuing to have the  
3 funding in place to accommodate that.  
4

5 COUNCIL MEMBER MENIN: Okay, thank you.

6 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay, questions from  
7 Council Member Restler followed by Paladino.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Surprised me for the  
9 second time today. Thank you Chair Brannan and Chair  
10 Krishnan for your great leadership and Commissioner  
11 Donoghue, I'm sorry to say that this is the last time  
12 we get to give you a hard time but I am grateful for  
13 your leadership.

14 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: I know you're really going  
15 to miss him, really.

16 SUE DONOGHUE: But I live in Brooklyn.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Is that too honest a  
18 laugh? There we go, you got it, I mean especially  
19 when Shekar gives me a hard time. But I will take a  
20 moment to just say, I think you've really done a  
21 great job leading the Parks Department and my sense  
22 is that despite some incredibly challenging dynamics  
23 with the budget office, that you brought clarity  
24 emission, great values, smart leadership and  
25 creativity to the department and I appreciate it and

2 I think my constituents do very much too but I do  
3 think that you've been dealt a really tough hand over  
4 these three plus years and you know I've talked to  
5 folks in Brooklyn Park that talked about never being  
6 this short staffed in decades, 40 plus years.

7 My impression is that the Parks Department is  
8 highly dependent on a seasonal part time workforce,  
9 is that right?

10 SUE DONOGHUE: Absolutely, we do have a large  
11 influx of staffing every season yes.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: And what are you  
13 anticipating or FY26 for your seasonal workforce?

14 SUE DONOGHUE: Uhm, I believe that is - we're  
15 expecting about 5,000 seasonal employees.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Got it and so when you  
17 started in FY22, do you have those numbers?

18 SUE DONOGHUE: For our seasonal workforce, do we  
19 have those? I think that number has been pretty  
20 steady overtime.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: My understanding is that  
22 the part time workforce, which I think you define it.  
23 The numbers that we're looking at are for FY26, 2774  
24 versus FY22 at 4460. Does that in terms of Parks  
25 headcount and I know headcount can be tracked in a

1  
2 variety of different ways but the part time headcount  
3 is declined by 40 percent over the course of these  
4 four years, 38 percent?

5 SUE DONOGHUE: Yeah, we can absolutely get back  
6 to you on those numbers. There is fluctuation  
7 because there's our seasonal staffing then there's  
8 our Parks opportunity program staffing that does tend  
9 to fluctuate based on kind of incoming people into  
10 the program so you might see fluctuation there, but  
11 we can get back to you in terms of what that specific  
12 number was season to season.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: I mean the concern for  
14 me is to just we've seen a steady decline every  
15 single year of the Adams Administration from 4,460  
16 going down to every year by significant numbers down  
17 to 2774 today. It just, it means that our parks  
18 don't have the staffing that is necessary to maintain  
19 the conditions that our communities deserve. And so,  
20 just you know what do you think is the necessary  
21 parks full time and part time headcount levels for us  
22 to be able to manage and maintain our parks at the  
23 levels that our communities expect and that I know  
24 the Parks department aspires to?

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4 SUE DONOGHUE: Thank you Council Member for the  
5 question and while I don't have an optimal number  
6 that I can give you, one I would say and you know  
7 your experience regularly we have an incredibly  
8 dedicated staff of workers which I so appreciate and  
9 people who give their all every day. There is no  
10 doubt as Commissioner, it would be great to see more  
11 staff and more resources but with the team that we  
12 have that's out there, they're doing everything they  
13 can to keep our parks clean and safe.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Okay, last thing is just  
15 Box Street Park, one of the central commitments of  
16 the green point rezoning, we are apparently a  
17 handful, several million dollars short to fully fund  
18 the project as a result of some additional  
19 remediation work that needs to occur at the site.  
20 Parks team has been great. We'd like to move funds  
21 around from a different park to fully fund this  
22 project and keep it moving and would love your  
23 support and assistance on that and if there's any  
24 time before you leave and the second - I lied, last  
25 actual question. Your team has worked closely with  
us on Columbus Park. We're hoping to have a  
significant allocation of resources in the upcoming

2 budget. You expect that that's a project that can  
3 move forward with significant funding?

4 SUE DONOGHUE: Thank you for the question and I  
5 know that is such an important project and a  
6 beautiful design and I think advocacy is always  
7 really important and the more voices at the table and  
8 the more people advocating for it, the better  
9 potential and chance that it has.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: But from the Parks  
11 Department perspective if there's tens of millions of  
12 dollars allocated to it, that it's a project that  
13 should move forward.

14 SUE DONOGHUE: Absolutely.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Terrific, thank you very  
16 much.

17 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Council Member Paladino.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER PALADINO: Good afternoon  
19 Commissioner and to echo the words of my colleagues,  
20 you will be sorely missed and I hope that we  
21 communicate into the future in some one way or  
22 another, our paths cross again.

23 I have an Intro. in right now; Intro. 60 and it  
24 regards motorized vehicles being allowed in our  
25 parks. I personally don't believe that motorized

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4 vehicles should be in our parks of any kind. So, I  
5 just want to put it forward to you and to the Parks  
6 Department. What can we do starting, I mean I want  
7 to get it into Committee. I want to get it on the  
8 floor. I want to get it voted on. These things are  
9 going at 30 miles an hour and they're a hazard. So,  
10 I just want your feedback on that if I can get it.

11 SUE DONOGHUE: Thank you Council Member for the  
12 question and appreciate your concern. We work really  
13 hard to uhm, through signage, through enforcement to  
14 make it clear that motorized vehicles are not allowed  
15 in our parks. We have an extensive signage program.  
16 We have worked hard through enforcement especially on  
17 our busy park drives where we have days where PEP,  
18 our Parks Enforcement Patrol is out with PD and you  
19 know stopping people, turning people away. There is  
20 also, the Mayor's Office has a micromobility  
21 taskforce that is looking at this because it's a huge  
22 concern that's been raised at the Mayor's Town Halls.  
23 We absolutely are concerned about the safety of  
24 people in our parks. And so, I understand your  
25 concern. It's something that we are very focused on.  
Our PEP Officers are focused on and PD and we worked

2 hard to have it be that these types of motorized  
3 vehicles are not on our parks roads.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER PALADINO: Thank you, we're doing  
5 the best we can. The most important thing now I  
6 think is just to make it against the law. To pass  
7 the law that just does not allow it. Alright, thank  
8 you very much.

9 SUE DONOGHUE: Thank you.

10 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Council Member Lee.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Hi, good afternoon. A few  
12 questions. I love talking about tree stumps. It's  
13 like one of my favorite topics and I know that \$2  
14 million more was added to the budget but just wanting  
15 to get a sense of if that is enough. I will say no  
16 because I would imagine that that is a pretty you  
17 know labor intensive task. And so, just wondering in  
18 terms of the additional money received, sufficient, I  
19 would say not sufficient but then how much more would  
20 you need because I believe there is an estimated  
21 about 4,000 stump removals that are in the queue but  
22 I'm sure there's more than that too. So, just wanted  
23 to get a sense.

24 SUE DONOGHUE: Yes and thank you for the question  
25 Council Member. So, you're right. We were pleased

1 with the one shot funding for stump removal, really  
2 important and then I would just go back to what I was  
3 mentioning earlier with our neighborhood tree  
4 planting approach. That is part of what is going to  
5 be beneficial about that is that it was the case it  
6 would just go on certain [INAUDIBLE 04:13:49] and  
7 just you know plant the trees now when we're on a  
8 block. We're not only going to be - we're going to  
9 be looking at the entire block, so not just planting  
10 trees but removing stumps that need to come out that  
11 have been there longstanding, filling - if there's a  
12 planted area that can no longer handle a tree, we'll  
13 be covering it or working with the community for what  
14 they want there. So, that combination of both the  
15 one shot and the neighborhood tree planting approach  
16 where we're going to be able to really be  
17 comprehensive in our approach and remove stumps is  
18 also going to help us get to that you know backlog of  
19 stumps, absolutely.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Okay great and the pruning  
22 issue as well? I know that it's seven year. I know  
23 that a lot of folks in our district have said that  
24 they haven't had their trees pruned in more than  
25 seven years but I'm just trying to understand because

2 I would imagine also that that's a very hard position  
3 to fill and just wanting to know if it's a worker  
4 shortage issue even if you had - like if you had all  
5 the money to be able to do it would you have the  
6 staffing to be able to do it capacity wise I guess?

7 MATT DRURY: Yeah sure, so to clarify, so our  
8 block pruning program, which is sort of the  
9 preventative sort of cycle if you will of seven years  
10 is largely conducted by contractors, external  
11 entities. We have in house climbers and pruners that  
12 do like assessments and emergency work if you will.  
13 Sort of so, the Block Pruning Program is largely  
14 handled and if you're hearing one seventh, because  
15 we're on the seven year cycle. One seventh of every  
16 community board district gets inspected and if the  
17 inspection determines that pruning is necessary and  
18 warranted, then it takes place. So, I would suggest  
19 that it's probably most likely that it's unlikely  
20 that a tree hasn't - it may not have been pruned but  
21 in that case it would have been inspected and a  
22 determination would have been made that pruning in  
23 that case was either not warranted or would have been  
24 inadvisable for some reason.

2 So, if there's specific addresses or  
3 constituents, we're happy to work with you and try to  
4 determine exactly what happened there but generally  
5 speaking, everything is getting kind of touched if  
6 you will at least once every seven years.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Okay and this includes these  
8 trees that are on city properties but are going into  
9 private properties, correct. Like maybe potentially  
10 poking into windows or roofs or potentially falling  
11 on you know the property right?

12 MATT DRURY: So, it's part of the tree risk  
13 management sort of approach that the Commissioner  
14 mentioned earlier, proximity to property is sort of  
15 part of that calculus as well.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Okay and sorry, just two  
17 more questions Chairs if that's okay. In terms of  
18 the time it takes for the Parks projects to happen  
19 and I think I may have asked this in a previous  
20 hearing so forgive me for forgetting what the  
21 response was but has - I know that some of the city  
22 projects have been looking more into design build but  
23 is that something that Parks Department has capacity  
24 to also look into in terms of shortening and saving  
25 money in timeline wise.

1  
2 SUE DONOGHUE: Absolutely, we are working closely  
3 with DDC on a number of projects that are using the  
4 design build methodology. So, a number of our new  
5 rec centers are designed build. We are also working  
6 with DDC, as I said we are looking at all different  
7 ways that we can speed up the renovation or  
8 construction of public restrooms. We are going do a  
9 design build package of five or six public restrooms  
10 to pilot that. So, yes, we are working very closely  
11 and hand and hand with our sister agencies to see how  
12 we can incorporate that as another methodology for  
13 speeding up the capital process delivery.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Nice, uhm and then my last  
15 question is just sort of shifting gears a little bit  
16 because uhm in my capacity as Chair of the Mental  
17 Health Disabilities Addictions Committee, there was a  
18 hearing we had, which was interesting that talks  
19 about a lot of the high needle exchange drug use  
20 areas, which included some of the parks. And I  
21 didn't realize that there's actually a lot of the  
22 boxes that you have in the Parks Department to be  
23 able to allow for safe disposal of the needles. And  
24 just wanted to get a sense of how we could get more  
25 of those in certain zip code or certain park areas

2 that need it? And then also, just if you could speak  
3 to your working relationship with some of the OPC's  
4 because I know there's a lot of nonprofits that are  
5 working in the drug overdose prevention world that  
6 are doing amazing work in the community and have been  
7 working with PD and also hopefully with parks. And  
8 so, I just wanted to get a sense of how we can get  
9 more of those boxes, what the partnership looks like  
10 with the nonprofits and then also, if you all are  
11 receiving any of the opioid settlement funds to help  
12 with that. Because we're trying to make sure that  
13 that money goes to the areas that need it the most.

14 SUE DONOGHUE: Thank you Council Member for the  
15 question and we are painfully aware of the incidents  
16 of drug use and very focused on how we can address it  
17 in parks. We do have a number of kiosks, they have  
18 been primarily located at a number of parks in the  
19 Bronx, but we are open to discussion if there are  
20 areas that you'd like us to look at, that's something  
21 that we can do. We work very closely with the OPC's  
22 and have a very close partnership with them. In the  
23 kiosks that we have, especially in the Bronx, it's a  
24 joint effort. They will help empty the needles in  
25 those kiosks. They will help to pick up needles on

2 the ground, so it's very, very close partnership with  
3 the OPC's.

4 In terms of the opioid settlement money, I'm not  
5 really sure about that.

6 MATT DRURY: My recollection is that it's routed  
7 through DOHMH. So, it is conceivable that in like a  
8 trickle down kind of way that some of it has impacted  
9 these but I think we'd have to get clarity from you.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: I would love to advocate to  
11 give you guys more funding in a partnership setting  
12 if you guys worked with the OPC's on that because I  
13 think between you and the OPC's, everyone is really  
14 trying to do great work in the community out there,  
15 so I would love to push for that.

16 And finally, I just wanted to say thank you  
17 Commissioner. You will be very much missed and thank  
18 you so much for your partnership and it's been  
19 wonderful working with you and your team. Well,  
20 hopefully your team is not going anywhere. Yeah,  
21 thank you so much.

22 SUE DONOGHUE: Thank you.

23 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Chair Krishnan.

24 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: Thank you. Commissioner,  
25 there's a couple more questions on a couple specific

2 issues. We talked about capital projects before. I  
3 just want to get a sense, in Flushing Meadows Corona  
4 Park, the Passarelle is obviously in a state of deep  
5 disrepair. It's my understanding that there is  
6 capital funding in the budget for it and what's the  
7 plan or is it on track for the work to be done soon?

8 SUE DONOGHUE: Yes, there is capital money in the  
9 budget for it, absolutely Council Member and uhm, so  
10 that originally Passarelle was going to be uhm  
11 completed and funding as part of the air train  
12 initiative and that obviously changed and so, uhm, we  
13 have been working closely with our sister agencies to  
14 figure out who could move forward on the project. We  
15 were very pleased that through our work with the Port  
16 Authority, they addressed, so uhm you know the  
17 project kind of came back to parks. We were pleased.  
18 We worked with the Port Authority to address some of  
19 the outstanding flag issues and make sure that we're  
20 addressing areas of concern and we're working with  
21 sister agencies to determine a timeline for moving  
22 the project forward.

23 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: Got it. Thank you and  
24 then another shift in topics entirely too to Hart  
25 Island. So, jurisdiction of Hart Island was

2 transferred to the Parks Department. It's part of a  
3 2019 law. The Parks Department is responsible for  
4 access for loved ones who are buried there. HRA is  
5 responsible for maintenance and burial operations.  
6 The FY26 budget, executive budget includes six  
7 positions and \$372,000 for operations. Additionally,  
8 the capital budget for 25-29 fiscal years includes  
9 \$7.6 million for various projects at Hart Island. My  
10 first question is what are the titles funded on Hart  
11 Island? Are there additional part time employees who  
12 work there too?

13 SUE DONOGHUE: Thank you for the question. We  
14 are incredibly proud of the work we've done on Hart  
15 Island. It was something that was handed to us at  
16 the end of the last Administration. It was overseen  
17 by the Department of Corrections and the Parks  
18 Department has really taken that on and in particular  
19 our rangers in a way that is just phenomenal. Our  
20 rangers facilitate tours - not tours, visits for  
21 loved ones from the island as you said, and then we  
22 also offer twice monthly tours for the public and I  
23 would encourage anybody in this room to sign up and  
24 go on one of those tours. The history that our

2 rangers provide and the education about Hart Island  
3 is just phenomenal.

4 We've also worked closely with DDC to do work on  
5 the Island. There is a chapel that remains that we  
6 are stabilizing. It's like a room in place. It's a  
7 really, really phenomenal place to visit. In terms  
8 of the individual lines, we can get back to you.  
9 There are no part time staff, there's not a bathroom  
10 facility on the island. We don't have staff that is  
11 resident at this point on a part time basis on the  
12 island. We have the rangers who conduct tours.  
13 There's a Ferry operator who facilitates getting  
14 people to the island. We were pleased to get capital  
15 funding for some slope stabilization. There is along  
16 one side of the island, there is - we have challenges  
17 so our natural resources group is doing some slope  
18 stabilization. We are really pleased to get that  
19 funding but in general you know it really is a  
20 testament to the Parks Department and our urban park  
21 rangers, how they transform that into a beautiful  
22 place for people to visit.

23 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: And I have been there  
24 several years ago and it was a very meaningful visit  
25 too. So, what is the Parks Department plan longer

2 term with Hart Island? We're doing the work now.

3 Has the Parks Department given some thought to the  
4 longer vision for them?

5 SUE DONOGHUE: Yes, we've given an awful lot of  
6 thought to that. We actually have a conceptual plan  
7 that we are going to be soon releasing or maybe did  
8 release already Hart Island. Did we already? Are we  
9 going to be releasing that conceptual- we will be  
10 releasing. There's uh - we have a whole, our  
11 planning division has spent a huge amount of time  
12 looking at how we can reenvision access to the  
13 Island. We first did a transportation study because  
14 one of the big challenges is obviously getting there  
15 and then we know that we need to have facilities for  
16 the public as I said. So, we want to have some kind  
17 of visitor center with a public restroom. It's  
18 really important for peoples enjoyment of the site  
19 but it is and we certainly recognize as an agency it  
20 is a solemn and peaceful site. We want to be  
21 respectful of the fact that it is a public burial  
22 ground and so we anticipate that it will be available  
23 really through guided tours to be respectful of the  
24 families and the people that are buried there but it  
25 is also a beautiful place. So, we do have a plan

2 that we'll be releasing soon about how we envision  
3 further enhancing it for access to the public.

4 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: And do you have a sense of  
5 when that plan is coming out?

6 SUE DONOGHUE: It should be in the next couple of  
7 months.

8 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: Got it, thank you and then  
9 finally does the Parks Department plan on permanently  
10 operating the island? Does it have plans to partner  
11 with other agencies, transfer management to other  
12 agencies or is it going to stay with the Parks  
13 Department?

14 SUE DONOGHUE: At this point and time unless  
15 someone tells us otherwise, we are anticipating we  
16 will continue to yes, manage it.

17 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: Got it. Thank you, those  
18 are all my questions Chair.

19 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Commissioner, Matt, thank  
20 you both very much. It's been a pleasure working  
21 with you. Look forward to working with you in the  
22 next couple of weeks and uh, we'll get uh, hopefully  
23 get some more money for your guys in the budget.

24 SUE DONOGHUE: We appreciate that. Thank you so  
25 much.

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4 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: Thank you. I just want to  
5 add again, thank you so much Commissioner. It's been  
6 a real pleasure and honor to partner with you in this  
7 work.

8 SUE DONOGHUE: Thank you. I appreciate that.

9 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay, we'll take a little  
10 break and then we're going to hear from the public.  
11 Uhm, yeah, we'll take a break and we'll hear from the  
12 public in like ten minutes. [04:26:36]- [04:35:13].

13 [GAVEL] Okay, we're now going to open it up to  
14 public testimony. A reminder this is a government  
15 proceeding and decorum must be maintained at all  
16 times. Please remain silent while others are  
17 testifying. The witness table is reserved for those  
18 who are testifying only. No video recording or  
19 photography is allowed from the witness table. You  
20 may not play audio or video recordings as testimony  
21 but you may submit a written transcript for the  
22 record. If you wish to speak today and you haven't  
23 signed up, please fill out an appearance card with  
24 the Sergeant at Arms and wait to be called. Each  
25 speaker will have two minutes to testify on today's  
26 topics. Either the Department of Transportation or  
27 the Department of Parks and Recreations FY26

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4 Executive Budgets. Written statements could also be  
5 submitted to the Sergeant at Arms or emailed to  
6 [testimony@council.nyc.gov](mailto:testimony@council.nyc.gov). It has to get in within  
7 72 hours of this hearing.

8 And now, I will call the first panel Richard  
9 Chow, Wain Chin, Adriano Averzano, Allison Langley,  
10 and Pasang Sherpa.

11 Okay, sure go ahead, say your name and you can  
12 begin.

13 RICHARD CHOW: Hello, good afternoon Chair and  
14 everyone. My name is Richard Chow. I am a member of  
15 New York Taxi Worker Alliance. I am a member. I am  
16 an owner/driver. I've been driving a taxi for 19  
17 years.

18 My lender, before my loan payment was \$2,670 for  
19 a month. After 2021, we want debt forgiveness and a  
20 CV bank grantee, my payment is \$1,234 because of the  
21 we driver participated and 15 day strike. Our lives  
22 are much easier because we can pay on time the  
23 payment. We can bring more food to the table for my  
24 family. Now, my fellow driver, their loan lender is  
25 Medallion loan, financing their payments were \$500  
per week. Some of months of five weeks, they paid  
\$2,500 per month. This is unfair and we want won the

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1 \$30,000 grant for the - but it's only \$6 million, it  
2 cost \$6 million for loan forgiveness and allowed the  
3 transfer the money, medallion under the CV grantee as  
4 soon as possible. Please keep the MRP program open.  
5 Give it to the driver. We want to repeat the sales  
6 tax about \$3,900 for on a wave. Please add more  
7 money for the tips and bring back \$1.00 per trip to  
8 the driver.  
9

10 Please help the driver and the CV also should  
11 invest a lot of million dollar budget in the park  
12 program. The CV should invest the medallion loan  
13 less than \$20 million settled for the medallion loan,  
14 saving the driver lives. Thank you so much.

15 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you very much.

16 RICHARD CHOW: You're welcome.

17 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Go ahead.

18 WAIN CHIN: Hi, good evening. Thank you for  
19 allowing me to speak. My name is Wain Chin. I am  
20 also a member of New York Taxi Worker Alliance.

21 Today, I am speaking literally heavy hearted  
22 because last Sunday it will be the 70 year anniversary  
23 of the passing of my dear friend Kenny Charles. He  
24 ended his life jumping in the East River, not far from  
25 the Grizzley Mansion and he's the first victim of the

1 medallion debt crisis. So, since then [04:39:44]  
2 lower medallion, about 3,000 but we still had about  
3 200 medallion [INAUDIBLE 04:39:55] because the  
4 current lender refused to participate in the program.  
5

6 So, our union working very hard to secure the  
7 funding for the new bank join the city program, MIB  
8 plus program. So, I ask the city to keep the MIB  
9 Plus program and the older medallion loan restrictor  
10 and also recently the federal law required the city  
11 to have 50 percent of the fleet to - we share  
12 accessible vehicle, ADA compliance and those cars  
13 cost about the better price of the regular taxi. So,  
14 uhm, I'm asking the city to keep the MIB Plus  
15 programs because we're going to need the program for  
16 the remaining so that we can purchase a new car. The  
17 DSE rule require all the new to be wheelchair  
18 accessible.

19 So, we need this program to continue and to loan  
20 refinance and also, we as a city to wave the safe  
21 test on the budgets of the vehicle. So, the cost of  
22 the new vehicle. Thank you for allowing me to speak.

23 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you very much.

24 ALLISON LANGLEY: Good afternoon. My name is  
25 Allison Langley; I'm a staff attorney at the New York

2 Taxi Workers Alliance. You'll hear more from my  
3 colleagues and our members about the demands related  
4 to the medallion relief program. Today, I'd like to  
5 focus my testimony on the wheelchair accessible  
6 vehicle mandate that yellow cab owner drivers are  
7 subject to. As a result of a 2014 settlement that  
8 the city entered into and a 2024 court order  
9 enforcing that settlement, 50 percent of the taxi  
10 fleet has to be wheelchair accessible vehicles.

11 And until that threshold is met, all medallion  
12 owners have to put wheelchair accessible vehicles or  
13 waves into service. The Taxi Workers Alliance  
14 supports this transition to an accessible fleet and  
15 the city has to ensure that this transition does not  
16 happen on the backs of owner drivers.

17 As Wain was explaining, Waves are twice as  
18 expensive as conventional vehicles and even though it  
19 was the city that entered into this settlement  
20 agreement, it's owners who have to pay the price for  
21 those vehicles. This doubling in expenses is coming  
22 at the tail end of decades of crisis. As you heard  
23 so compellingly from Wain, you know this has had a  
24 real life or death impact on this community. People  
25 have died because of the debt crisis and on top of

2 that there's the entry of Uber and Lyft, the COVID-19  
3 crisis and as a result, taxi trips are just 26  
4 percent of the level they were at in March 2014 which  
5 is when this settlement agreement was entered into.

6 The transition to an accessible fleet demands the  
7 same level of attention and care from the city and  
8 City Council that the Council is applying to the rest  
9 of the transportation infrastructure in the city.

10 So, we ask that the City Council first amend the  
11 city's sales tax to exempt wheelchair accessible  
12 vehicles that are purchased for use as taxi's. This  
13 will be a savings of nearly \$4,000 per vehicle and  
14 that money will go right back into the pockets of  
15 owner drivers and the cost to the city is  
16 extraordinarily minimal.

17 This year, for example, which is some back of  
18 math about how many vehicles are retiring, uhm, would  
19 cost the city around \$500,000 in lost revenue if they  
20 make this amendment. So, it's a common sense  
21 intervention. It has to happen. In addition, the  
22 city has to fund the taxi cab improvement fund. This  
23 is a fund set up in the wake of the 2014 Settlement  
24 to support owner drivers in the purchase and  
25 operation of waves. However, the funding has been

2 solely by drivers labor, as its funded only on a  
3 surcharge on each trip. The trips that driver's  
4 perform. Now of course, as you've seen the trip  
5 levels get decimated between 2014 and now, not only  
6 does that impact driver income but that also has  
7 impacted TIFC collections. So, TIFC is actually  
8 going to be insolvent in the next year or two.

9 And so that the Council has to support TIFC with  
10 more funding. The TLC has been trying to address  
11 this affordability crisis. Waves require bigger down  
12 payments because they're twice as expensive. Many  
13 owner drivers simply cannot afford that cost, so TLC  
14 rearranged the benefits to increase the upfront  
15 benefits drivers get from TIFC. However, to do that,  
16 they had to entirely get rid of, slash the \$1.00 per  
17 trip that drivers were receiving to operate a wave.  
18 That resulted in up to a \$3,000 loss in annual wages  
19 for drivers and that's just unacceptable,  
20 particularly in this moment of crisis and poverty.  
21 So, we ask that the City Council support us in these  
22 demands to support owner drivers in the same way that  
23 you have supported the rest of the transportation  
24 infrastructure in the city.

25 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you.

2 ADRIANO AVERZANO: Hi, my name is Adriano  
3 Averzano. I am a Native New Yorker, taxi driver  
4 owner operator. I've been driving a taxi for 22  
5 years. I also own my medallion, owner/operator. I'm  
6 here to try to express my support for the MRP program  
7 and extending the grant that the city would give for  
8 the \$30,000 to restructure the loans.

9 Currently, you know my loan is \$2,500. If I can  
10 get into this program, it would cut my loan in half.  
11 It would also give me a lower interest rate. It  
12 would drop me about three points and it would give me  
13 the grant of \$30,000 towards the principle of my loan  
14 and it would greatly effect my monthly overhead and  
15 my quality of life. It would drop my payments about  
16 \$15,000 a year, which with the mounting costs and  
17 being beaten up financially over the years through  
18 the things that have happened and the city with Uber  
19 and the Waves and everything else, it would provide  
20 much, much, much needed assistance to my overall -  
21 not in my overall expenses monthly.

22 So, I implore you to try to extend the program  
23 for people like me who are at the tail end of this  
24 journey. The New York City Taxi Workers Alliance has  
25 been working tirelessly to try to raise the funding

2 and it seems like they're just at the tail end of  
3 wrapping everything up for people like me. I know  
4 that there's a discrepancy in the timeframe that was  
5 being allotted but again, I implore you to extend it  
6 to get the last maybe hundred drivers that are  
7 greatly effected by this. You know it would greatly  
8 effect the quality of life of the drivers. I know  
9 for me, it would be a major, major, major difference  
10 you know. Uh, thank you.

11 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you all very much.

12 Okay, thank you very much.

13 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you.

14 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay, our next panel Carmen  
15 De Leon, Dejon Williams (SP?), Marlana Giga, Joe  
16 Puleo, and Ralph Basile or Basless (SP?), sorry,  
17 Basilese (SP?).

18 Joe you could start.

19 JOE PULEO: Alright, thank you. Thank you for  
20 having me. Thank you Chair. Thank you City Council  
21 people. My name is Joe Puleo for those of you who  
22 don't know me. I am the President of Local 983. I  
23 represent all of the City Seasonal Aides, the Urban  
24 Park Rangers, the PEP officers and the Associate Park  
25 Service workers.

2 Okay, I'd like to begin by thanking those who  
3 have helped us throughout the years including this  
4 particular session but we are far from being where we  
5 should be. Our rangers are constantly, constantly,  
6 because they are not redlined or baselined as we say.  
7 They are in jeopardy and in one particular year, they  
8 were actually laid off. Okay, these rangers, which  
9 used to be in the hundreds, so now under 100. We  
10 need the restoration. We need to keep them  
11 baselined. We need additions to what we have. They  
12 provide services. They provide what's known as  
13 preventive maintenance in a sense that they teach our  
14 children about parks and how they are important and  
15 rather to destroy, they aid in the ability for them  
16 to get actively involved and actually support our  
17 parks in the future.

18 Our PEP officers are difficult to hire. They  
19 cannot do the demands and needs that the city has for  
20 them. A lot of these PEP officers are now riding by  
21 themselves and once the summer months come in, they  
22 are unable to even cover our parks. They are  
23 dedicated to beaches, to the pools, including  
24 recreation centers. They cannot perform the job that  
25 they are out there simply because there aren't enough

2 of them. And as for Associate Park Service Workers,  
3 the CDL drivers, they are equivalent to the  
4 Sanitation force in the city streets. They provide a  
5 service for our parks. We need more of them to as  
6 well and they are another title that is difficult to  
7 recruit because of what's happening in the outside  
8 market. CDL drivers are high in demand. The salary  
9 that these individuals get does not meet the market  
10 rate.

11 I can go on and on but I'll end it at that note.  
12 Again, where we need more - you know this has been  
13 the worst that I've seen in 27 years where our  
14 numbers have dropped dramatically. So, I look  
15 forward in the near future for us to see that this is  
16 taken care of. Thank you.

17 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you Joe.

18 MARLENA GIGA: Hi, thank you for having us. My  
19 name is Marlana Giga. I'm a Treasurer and PEP  
20 officer with over 20 years of services to New York  
21 City, born and raised in the Bronx.

22 The parks in New York City are vital to all  
23 communities, not just the parks like Brooklyn Bridge,  
24 Highline and Central Park that have private funding  
25 for employees and non-city employees to take care of

1 these parks. All New Yorkers deserve clean, safe,  
2 and public programs, not just the parks that can  
3 afford to pay for them. The seasonal staff, CSA  
4 position is vital to assist with maintenance and  
5 security in playgrounds, pools and beaches. The  
6 number of CSA's should be increased by 1,000. Park  
7 enforcement also does not rely on NYPD despite what  
8 the Commissioner stated. The number of PEP officers  
9 currently in the Bronx, which I verified while I was  
10 here, is 37 officers, not 70, which is 6,824 acres to  
11 patrol with 37 officers. And the fact that rangers,  
12 Council and Local 983 has to beg for funding for Park  
13 Rangers in New York City is a disgrace.

14  
15 And last, the APSW title as the President said,  
16 is a hard to recruit title due to the CDL  
17 requirements and lack of vehicles which impact the  
18 cleanliness of parks and the quality of life for all.  
19 Please restore the budget for rangers, PEP, CSA, and  
20 APSW titles. Thank you.

21 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you.

22 DEJON WILLIAMS Good afternoon, my name is Dejon  
23 Williams, President of Local 299 representing  
24 recreation workers. My members include individuals  
25 who care for the children of the city. Some adults

2 and also seniors, we create programs and provide  
3 activities for various individuals. Shortages in  
4 staff, programming and facility hours are some of the  
5 main concerns with the funding cuts. There are  
6 currently seven recreation centers closed. Two of  
7 those recreation centers are the only indoor pools  
8 above 96<sup>th</sup> Street for the Parks Department, which  
9 limits - which eliminates, excuse me, the activity of  
10 swimming above 96 without traveling more than a mile  
11 and a half for the next local indoor recreation  
12 center pool.

13 My members are largely a part of the individuals  
14 who are one shot financial jobs. They are summer  
15 program workers and their jobs are not confirmed  
16 until the budget is confirmed. So, we have  
17 approximately 300 staffers seasonally in the summer  
18 who have to wait, possibly working and getting  
19 rehired due to the financial crisis. Thank you.

20 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you all very much.  
21 Thank you very much. Okay, now we have Suhali  
22 Mendez, Bhairavi Desai, and Dorothy Leconte.

23 UNIDENTIFIED: Can I begin?

24 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Sure, which ever way you  
25 want.

2 SUHALI MENDEZ: Good afternoon. My name is  
3 Suhali Mendez. I am the Policy and Legislative  
4 Coordinator at New York Lawyers for the Public  
5 Interest and I'm going to discuss things on the  
6 transportation front. So, the one thing I want to  
7 bring up is the Green Rides Initiative. We urge the  
8 Council to encourage city taxi and limousine  
9 Commission to meet with the MTA to determine  
10 congestion pricing can be utilized to assist TLC and  
11 carrying out the Green Rides Initiative which  
12 requires all high volume for hire vehicles, including  
13 Uber and Lyft to be either wheelchair accessible or  
14 zero emissions by 2030.

15 Further NYLPI recommends that this Council urges  
16 TLC to amend and enhance its Green Rides Initiative  
17 to require that all HVFHV's to be wheelchair  
18 accessible and zero emission by 2030. By permitting  
19 industry to choose between wheelchair accessible  
20 vehicles and zero emission vehicles, the  
21 transportation needs of the disability community will  
22 be at risk.

23 Through wheelchair accessibility vehicles, zero  
24 emission are not currently available in the United  
25 States. The city can harness this immense market

2 power to influence changes in this regard. TLC must  
3 consult with vehicle manufacturers to encourage the  
4 design of a marketable wheelchair accessible vehicle,  
5 zero emission vehicle.

6 Uhm, I realize I don't have much time so  
7 additional information will be provided in testimony  
8 including Fair Fares, Access A Ride, and other  
9 recommendations. I thank you for your time and  
10 allowing me to provide testimony today.

11 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you very much. Go  
12 ahead, make sure your mic is on.

13 DOROTHY LECONTE: Okay, my name is Dorothy  
14 Leconte. I am a Taxi Alliance Member and since 2019,  
15 we've been fighting for the debt forgiveness. I  
16 understand a few, many drivers got the debt  
17 forgiveness. Their life is better and I've been one  
18 of the ones in the front wanting to fight to make  
19 everybody's life better, including me but I find  
20 myself in the bubble now. My mortgage for the  
21 medallion is \$2,000 starting next, this month. I  
22 mean the first of June and the expenses that we have  
23 and I will appreciate if Taxi Limousine will extend  
24 the program that Department 6,000 yellow cab  
25 owner/driver to be in and some of us are not

2 participate. It's not that we're not participate, we  
3 don't get the chance.

4 So, what I'm asking for taxi limousine to  
5 continue extending the program for us including me  
6 because this is very hard. I'm working six days and  
7 I make my payment every month. I never miss one  
8 payment. So, that's also really very much a burden  
9 on me because expenses now, everything is expensive  
10 and the taxi is the priority for me. I cannot afford  
11 to loose the yellow cab because this is all I have  
12 after I lost all my retirement and I'm trying to keep  
13 it on. So, please, I'm asking for the help to see if  
14 you can extend the forgiveness for me and I could  
15 continue going my life. Thank you.

16 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you very much.

17 BHAIRAVI DESAI: Good afternoon. My name is  
18 Bhairavi Desai; I am the Executive Director of the  
19 New York Taxi Workers Alliance. It's an honor to  
20 follow my sister Dorothy Leconte, who has served the  
21 City of New York for over 38 years as a yellow cab  
22 driver. And as Dorothy and as many of our members  
23 spoke earlier, the debt that they have been under is  
24 crushing. The city found a solution after 45 day  
25 occupation of city hall and including a 15 day hunger

1 strike, the city agreed to be the guarantor on these  
2 loans through a program called the Medallion Relief  
3 Program.  
4

5 Many lenders have already participated with a you  
6 know ground breaking \$475 million in forgiveness.  
7 However, we estimate that there are about 200 loans  
8 that remain. That's it. We're just talking about  
9 you know maybe 200, 215 loans that remain but for  
10 each of these loans, they represent families that  
11 have truly in a crisis struggle because the debts  
12 that they are paying off are just crushing. Their  
13 existing lenders for the majority of them did not  
14 want to enter into the program. So, our union, the  
15 Taxi Workers Alliance, we've been working over the  
16 last three years to bring new lenders into the  
17 industry that would offer to loan the owner/drivers  
18 enough money to make a cash settlement with their  
19 current lender. And then the new loan would be put  
20 into the City's Medallion Relief program. However,  
21 the TLC has testified that the program came to an end  
22 in December, which means that these loans would not  
23 be eligible for a \$30,000 grant or the city backed  
24 guarantee and without these two programs, we will not  
25 be able to get these loans restructured.

4 Nobody should be left behind. 200 loans, we are  
5 so close to the finish line. Why would we not cross  
6 this finish line for every single family? They all  
7 deserve this. Please advocate with the city that  
8 this program must remain open until every final loan  
9 you know is restructured under the Medallion Relief  
10 program.

11 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you. Chair Brooks-  
12 Powers.

13 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you all for the  
14 testimony and just a follow up question, just to  
15 understand the remaining 200 loans.

16 BHAIRAVI DESAI: Hmm, hmm.

17 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Do we know that those  
18 existing ones are as a result the program ending or  
19 if those potential applicants did not apply and may  
20 not want to apply because as you know in some of the  
21 hearings we've asked this and we're trying to get a  
22 clearer picture as to, because I know some of the  
23 drivers have chosen not to apply. So, I just wanted  
24 clarity on that.

25 BHAIRAVI DESAI: So, first it's up to their  
current lender. So whether or not the lender is  
agreeable to restructure the loan.

2 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Right and some of  
3 them are not participants, right?

4 BHAIRAVI DESAI: Right but the drivers want to  
5 participate and so, because some of these lenders  
6 refuse to participate, they have, however, been  
7 willing to make cash settlements. So, if you give  
8 them \$200,000, they will forgive the rest of the  
9 debt. And so, our union has been trying to raise -  
10 so the city will give \$30,000 from this program.  
11 We've been working with banks to raise the remaining  
12 \$170,000. So, we can offer that to these lenders and  
13 then be done with that debt and we're really close to  
14 the finish line. You know Chairman Doe had given us  
15 really up until December of last year, we were not  
16 able to raise all the funds that we need but we  
17 continue to work on it and you know frankly speaking,  
18 we've been doing that work all on our own without the  
19 support of anybody at the city and all we're asking  
20 for from the city is a little bit more time for us to  
21 you know cross the finish line.

22 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you for that  
23 and let's connect offline to see how we can be able  
24 to be more supportive in that area.

25 BHAIRAVI DESAI: Wonderful, thank you.

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4 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you.

5 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you all very much for  
6 your testimony. Okay next panel we have Morgan  
7 Monaco, Heather Lubov, Adam Ganser, Alia Soomro and  
8 Emily Walker.

9 Hi Morgan, you want to begin?

10 MORGAN MONACO: Sure. Good afternoon, I'm Morgan  
11 Monaco, President of the Prospect Park Alliance. A  
12 nonprofit organization that operates Brooklyn's  
13 Flagship Park in partnership with the city. I'm also  
14 a Co-Chair of the parks and open spaces partners, a  
15 citywide network of more than 50 nonprofit  
16 organizations dedicated to stewarding and programming  
17 New York City's green and open spaces. Together, we  
18 share a vision of an equitable and resilient park  
19 system for all New Yorkers.

20 I'd like to thank the Council for holding today's  
21 hearing and for joining us in our fight to protect  
22 the Parks Department budget. While we thank the  
23 Administration for providing nearly \$19 million in  
24 funding as part of the FY26 budget. We encourage the  
25 Administration and the Council to keep pushing  
farther to really ensure that our parks are funded in  
the way that New Yorkers deserve.

2 The alliance is a proud member of the Play Fair  
3 Campaigns restore the Parks Budget and ensure there's  
4 an additional \$65 million investment to strengthen  
5 our parks system and restore almost 800 lost  
6 positions. These roles are critical to ensuring that  
7 our parks remain clean, safe and welcoming spaces for  
8 our communities. We are also urging the city to  
9 baseline this funding to prevent the yearly budget  
10 cuts that undermine our park system.

11 Prospect Park is truly a public, private  
12 partnership. We rely on the city to help with day to  
13 day trash pickup and facility maintenance. This  
14 essential service is core to making Prospect Park a  
15 welcoming and accessible space for the diverse  
16 communities of Brooklyn. Our parks are not luxuries,  
17 they are essential community spaces where people who  
18 don't go upstate or to the Hamptons have Father's Day  
19 barbeques or see free theater or public art. The  
20 impacts of cutting parks are not just about the hard  
21 working staff but about the people who call New York  
22 City home. Our parks are the destinations people  
23 come to in moments of joy and in moments in sorrow or  
24 protest.

2 During this political environment when our  
3 democracy is being tested. Our parks are the great  
4 equalizers of the city and are one of the few  
5 remaining free open and democratic spaces and we need  
6 them now more than ever. Since the pandemic,  
7 visitors shift to parks has increased significantly  
8 but at the same time the city has not kept up with  
9 its record, use and funding of parks for the city  
10 budget.

11 We implore the city to not only increase funding  
12 for parks but also move beyond cycle to cycle funding  
13 model in baselining this additional funding,  
14 therefore securing jobs for New Yorkers and living up  
15 to our mission as being the greatest city in the  
16 world with a clean, safe and resilient accessible  
17 park system. Thanks.

18 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you. Go ahead.

19 ADAM GANSER: Hi there. My name is Adam Ganser.  
20 I'm the Executive Director of New Yorkers for Parks.  
21 We along with the Legal Conservation Voters and DC37  
22 founded the Play Fair For Parks Coalition, which now  
23 numbers more than 400 organizations. Thank you Chair  
24 Brannan and Chair Krishnan for the ability - uh the  
25 opportunity to speak today.

2 Under normal circumstances, I would install the  
3 broad value of our city's parks and park system. The  
4 public health benefits. How they mitigate heat and  
5 flooding. Their outsize economic impact. Instead,  
6 we're talking about basic services, keeping our parks  
7 safe and clean.

8 I'll read a headline from the New York Times this  
9 morning about St Mary's Parks. It's the largest  
10 public park in the South Bronx that was once a refuge  
11 in a neighborhood marked by poverty and neglect. Now  
12 many residents actively avoid it. This is true  
13 throughout the city. This is not the city New  
14 Yorkers deserve and it is directly a result of  
15 repeated budget cuts over the last three years for  
16 the Parks Department. In the last three years, we  
17 heard the Commissioner note that the net loss of  
18 positions is roughly 700. I'd like to add that to  
19 701 as I fear the Commissioner herself is leaving  
20 because of the lack of funding for parks and a lack  
21 of support from the Administration.

22 The PEG cuts, the hiring freezes, the eliminated  
23 programs. This has been ongoing. The agency has  
24 been decimated. The Administration's executive  
25 budget does not restore these losses. We sincerely

2 appreciate the City Council's strong position to  
3 mandate \$65 million be added to the Parks Department  
4 Budget to restore the core staffing and simply make  
5 our parks safe and clean.

6 That's where we are. No grand vision, just core  
7 services. The agency needs PEP officers so New  
8 Yorkers can feel safe in their parks, forestry,  
9 natural areas staff, programming staff to provide  
10 recreational activities for New Yorkers to children  
11 and we need these positions to be baselined so the  
12 dedicated park workers who fill these positions could  
13 count on jobs year after year.

14 We've seen libraries get their budgets fully  
15 restored and we've seen the same for cultural. Now  
16 is the time for our parks and we're counting on the  
17 Council to remain firm in this budget negotiation and  
18 we are very, very grateful for your support. Thank  
19 you.

20 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you. Go ahead.

21 HEATHER LUBOV: Hi, thanks Chair Brannan,  
22 Krishnan, and Brooks-Powers. Oh, she left, sorry.  
23 I'm Heather Lubov. I'm the Executive Director of  
24 City Parks Foundation and also a proud member of the  
25 Play Fair Coalition. I'm here today because the

1 Mayor's Executive Budget fails New York City Parks  
2 and the New Yorkers who rely on them. City Parks  
3 foundations programs rely on both private fundraising  
4 and also generous discretionary funding from City  
5 Council Members to reach neighborhoods that need  
6 those programs most but even with this backing, our  
7 programs are directly effected by the city's overall  
8 disinvestment in parks.  
9

10 When park maintenance and security are  
11 understaffed, we face dirty and unsafe conditions,  
12 shuttered restrooms, delayed event permits and missed  
13 opportunities for thousands of children and seniors.  
14 The majority of whom live in environmental justice  
15 areas. The budget crisis is not abstract for us. It  
16 is tangible, immediate and exhausting. Every week  
17 our Partnerships for Parks team, which has suffered  
18 from vacancies and the inability to hire any external  
19 candidates to fill these positions is out in  
20 neighborhoods across the city, supporting local  
21 volunteers who are determined to make their parks  
22 cleaner, safer and more welcoming.

23 Crucial funding through the Citywide Parks Equity  
24 Initiative is what allows us to offer year around  
25 coaching, leadership development and seed grants to

1 nearly 600 community groups. Increased funding for  
2 parks is not optional. It's the difference between  
3 an open space that languishes and one that becomes a  
4 true community anchor. Volunteers are not a  
5 substitute for adequate staff. Without a significant  
6 increase in the budget, we simply cannot meet the  
7 surging needs created by this ongoing disinvestment.  
8

9 We've done what we can, raising private dollars  
10 and redistributing that money through the New York  
11 City Green Fund, supporting volunteers and offering  
12 free programs, even serving as a fiscal sponsor for  
13 other private funds to support the city. Everyone is  
14 stepping up except the Mayor. Parks are not a luxury  
15 and they are not spaces we can take for granted.  
16 It's time to fund our parks like the essential public  
17 service they truly are.

18 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Agree, thank you.

19 ALIA SOOMRO: Good afternoon. My name is Alia  
20 Soomro and I am the Deputy Director for New York City  
21 Policy at the New York League of Conservation Voters.  
22 Thank you, Chairs Brannan, Krishnan and Brooks-  
23 Powers. I've submitted longer written testimony.

24 First off, we really appreciate the City  
25 Council's FY26 Preliminary Budget response calling

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2 for \$65.7 million for the Parks Department. That  
3 would restore and baseline over 600 jobs.

4 As a Play Fair member, we will continue to push  
5 the coalitions goal of a \$79.7 million restoration in  
6 FY26 and that would restore 795 critical New York  
7 City Parks positions. With that said, following  
8 several years of cuts to New York City Parks and no  
9 restorations to the staff and programs, the Mayor's  
10 FY26 Executive Budget once again under resources the  
11 staff and stewards of our city's parks. While the  
12 Mayor continuously celebrated baselining positions in  
13 his executive budget speech, New York City Parks was  
14 not included. New York City Parks has lost almost  
15 800 critical positions. The city's parks workforce  
16 is operating at a historic low, which means more  
17 trash, longer cleanup times, less frequent tree  
18 maintenance. I can go on and on. Fully restoring  
19 these lost positions will create good paying union  
20 jobs that support working families.

21 So, as a member of the Play Fair For Parks  
22 Coalition as well as the Forest For All Coalition,  
23 NYLCV is calling for restoring \$79.7 million to DPR  
24 and committing \$1 million for a robust multiagency  
25

2 planning process for the New York City Urban Forest  
3 Plan.

4 If we want to invest in our city's quality of  
5 life and safety and prepare for the climate crisis,  
6 which is here right now, now is the time to restore  
7 our city's parks funding. We stand with the Play  
8 Fair Coalition and Forest For All calling for the  
9 full restoration and we look forward to working with  
10 you. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

11 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you.

12 EMILY WALKER: Good afternoon. My name is Emily  
13 Walker and I am the Senior Manager of External  
14 Affairs at the Natural Areas Conservancy. We're a  
15 proud member of the Play Fair and Forest For All NYC  
16 Coalitions. Thank you to Chair Brannan and Chair  
17 Krishnan for the opportunity to speak today.

18 We want to start by thanking the City Council for  
19 calling for restored funding for our natural areas  
20 staff in your Preliminary Budget response. We also  
21 thank Mayor Adams for adding a \$3 million one shot  
22 allocation for natural areas into the FY26 Executive  
23 Budget. This is a meaningful investment in the care  
24 of our natural areas; however, we urgently ask that  
25

2 this funding be made permanent and baselined in order  
3 to be effective.

4 In the FY25 budget, we lost 51 critical forest  
5 management positions and we are concerned that a one  
6 year restoration of funding will continue to leave us  
7 in an uncertain cycle of inadequate staffing and  
8 management in our natural areas.

9 In a city of seven million trees, five million of  
10 them are located within our natural forested areas.  
11 The Mayor's decision to eliminate funding last year  
12 for forest management staff has drastically reduced  
13 the capacity of the city to meaningfully manage and  
14 address challenges in our forests, making them more  
15 susceptible to increasingly urgent concerns, like the  
16 hundreds of brush fires that occurred in our parks  
17 last fall.

18 Last summer, the NAC conducted its first  
19 ecological assessment of forested natural areas in  
20 ten years and we found troubling signs of degrading  
21 forest health and quality across the city. Our  
22 research found invasive vines present in 92 percent  
23 of the forest plots that our researchers visited and  
24 also found that our forest midstory is showing a  
25 decline in the number of native tree species.

2 Both of these data points indicate that forestry  
3 generation is suffering in our natural areas. The  
4 vast presence of vines is also a reflection of  
5 insufficient staffing to care for our forests. With  
6 more permanent on the ground staff for forest care,  
7 NYC Parks would better be able to manage this threat  
8 to our trees.

9 Again, while we are thankful to see the funding  
10 at least partially restored in the FY26 Executive  
11 Budget, we believe we should end the budget dance for  
12 our natural areas and parks once and for all. We  
13 urgently ask for all one shot allocations to be made  
14 permanent to provide consistent year over year  
15 support for our city's precious and increasing  
16 fragile natural areas.

17 The ability to have more dedicated full time  
18 staff for NYC Parks to care for our forest and  
19 wetlands would allow us to better protect what we  
20 have before they disappear from us forever. Thank  
21 you.

22 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you. Morgan, quick  
23 question. Has Prospect Park fully recovered after  
24 the fires?

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2 MORGAN MONACO: Thank you for the question. We  
3 are in the process of recovery. We had a wonderful  
4 outpouring of support following the fire and our  
5 natural areas restoration team have installed soil  
6 fabric to stabilize the hillside and we've seeded the  
7 area, so we are seeing some regeneration happening  
8 but it will take several years because we did lose  
9 some mature trees for us to fully regrow the forest  
10 that we have but we are really appreciative of New  
11 Yorkers outpouring of support for our forest.

12 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thanks everybody. Thanks  
13 for all you do. Okay, our next panel Chelten  
14 Leggett, Aresh Javadi, Merritt Birnbaum, Kaitlin  
15 Krause, Gabrielle Perez.

16 CHAIRPERSON KRISHNAN: You can begin.

17 Thank you Council Member Krishnan and Council  
18 Member Brannan. My name is Merritt Birnbaum. I'm  
19 the President and CEO of Riverside Park Conservancy.  
20 We work in partnership with NYC Parks to care for 400  
21 acres of public parkland that's spread across six  
22 miles from West 59<sup>th</sup> Street to West 181<sup>st</sup> Street in  
23 Manhattan. I'm here again because this is a  
24 screaming moment for NYC Parks. Our parks are the  
25 lungs of the city and they are being deprived of

1 oxygen. Again, the city budget fails to make simple  
2 restorations that would make our park system  
3 functional and able to deliver exponential benefit  
4 for the lives of every day New Yorkers. I want to  
5 address the fact that the Mayor touted the creation  
6 of a Second Shift. This program is a new need. It  
7 is not a restoration of previous staffing levels.  
8 So, just so we're clear, it's wonderful that certain  
9 areas of the system will get this later crew so that  
10 some bathrooms can stay open after 3:30 and some  
11 trash cans can get emptied later in the day but this  
12 is not a solution to the crisis of understaffing in  
13 our parks. This program will not make our parks  
14 greener and safer and cleaner in the long term in a  
15 sustainable way. It's really just scratching the  
16 service of what's needed. What is needed is 795  
17 restored and baselined positions citywide, period.  
18 Our lawns are overgrown. Our trees are dangerously  
19 unpruned; our trash is piling up and really what I  
20 wanted to read was a comment that our district  
21 received from a community member. Why are the  
22 sinkholes still here? I can't remember them not  
23 being here. Why is there no cleanup? The mess of  
24 sweet gumball seed pods are all over the place and on  
25

2 more than one occasion, I have almost fallen. Leaf  
3 debris from the fall season remains. Why are there  
4 not better trash receptacles? Not only are they not  
5 large enough but they can't accommodate pizza boxes  
6 and they are not rodent proof. The pavement is  
7 uneven and dangerous in numerous locations. The  
8 benches are gross. See if you would like to sit on  
9 one of these benches that are overgrown with moss.  
10 Not sure how tan pants would look following a lunch  
11 break. This is what it looks like when you cut off  
12 maintenance staff. When you cut city park workers.  
13 When you make it so that a park can't even be a place  
14 where you enjoy lunch on a bench under a tree.

15 This is why we need to fund the basics of our  
16 park system. Thank you.

17 GABRIELLE PEREZ: Hello, hi my name is Gabby  
18 Perez. I'm coming here representing another  
19 organization that's in the Play Fair Coalition and  
20 the Forest For All NYC Coalition called the Bronx is  
21 Blooming. We do so much work in Parks throughout the  
22 Bronx. We are in Soundview Park every single  
23 Saturday. We're in St Mary's Park every other  
24 Friday. We're in Crotona Park every other Friday.  
25 The list goes on and on. We care for about 12 parks

1 mostly in the South Bronx and I've been doing this  
2 work since 2019 and I, you know I see first hand how  
3 much it takes. We're a small team but we hire  
4 seasonally about 100 SYEP young people to join us in  
5 the summer and it just, it takes a lot. We do the  
6 best we can. We mulch the young trees. We weed in  
7 the garden beds. We remove invasive species. We  
8 clean up trash but without you know adequate funding  
9 of one percent you know from the city budget  
10 hopefully or hopefully even more. It will just  
11 constantly feel like filling a bucket with you know  
12 holes in it and we just - I'm just here to echo  
13 everybody in saying that we need to show love to our  
14 parks and I'm specifically you know thinking about  
15 Parks here in the Bronx that - not here in the Bronx  
16 but Parks in the Bronx that don't you know have  
17 conservancies and a lot of private funding and stuff  
18 like that and also, just like on a personal note, you  
19 know these parks are - you know people have said it  
20 before but like this is where life happens. This is  
21 where family reunions are had. This is where I grew  
22 up you know playing in Maloley Park - oh but now it's  
23 called Wendell T., Reverend Wendell T. Foster Park  
24 and now I take care of that park and it's beautiful  
25

1  
2 you know to have that - this relationship with parks  
3 and I feel like I'm rambling now but yeah, just I'm  
4 here to support more funding for the parks as well.

5 Thank you Chair Krishnan. I really commend your  
6 love and it comes through of how much work you've  
7 done in supporting the Parks. So, thank you very,  
8 very much and also Chair Brannan, wherever you are.  
9 Thank you for holding this. Also, I just wanted to  
10 thank all of the folks who are behind the scenes.  
11 Security, tech and all the folks who are still here,  
12 as well as all of the attendants that have really  
13 love what we're here for.

14 ARESH JAVADI: So, my name is Aresh Javadi and I  
15 am the Director of More Gardens Fund and I'm also  
16 part of the Forest For All Coalition. We are a  
17 grassroot organization dedicated to ecological  
18 justice, cultural celebration and the permanent  
19 protection of New York City's community gardens.  
20 Since 1998, we have partnered with the residents to  
21 preserve over 500 green spaces, especially in  
22 underserved Black, Brown and immigrant communities  
23 through living structures, native plantings, youth  
24 education programs, direct action and community led  
25 art installations, we work to transform asphalt heavy

2 neighborhoods into vibrant sanctuaries of shade,  
3 food, learning, and joy.

4 We really do need to like put a lot more money.  
5 We are as we said .6 percent. Boston is like one,  
6 Chicago is 1.7, San Francisco is 2 percent. We need  
7 to be above these other cities. I know people say 1  
8 percent but we should be like 2.5 percent. Something  
9 really like that stands out and protects all of our  
10 parks.

11 So, we're More Gardens so we want more, not just  
12 1 percent but 2.5 percent. Equity in green spaces is  
13 one of the most important things in the community  
14 gardens and especially in park deficient  
15 neighborhoods where people of color deserve green,  
16 safe, vibrant spaces to gather, heal and thrive. And  
17 that's exactly what community gardens do. Urban heat  
18 and climate justice, gardens cool down overheated  
19 blocks and absorb stormwater. Willow structures and  
20 tree canopy provide shade and beauty while improving  
21 air quality. Youth education and leadership, our  
22 free programs teach environmental science, food  
23 justice and art to youth.

24 Gardens are open air classrooms and platform for  
25 leadership, public health and mental wellness.

2 Community gardens reduce stress, support healing and  
3 offer access to healthy food and herbal medicine.  
4 They are sanctuaries in the heart of the city,  
5 cultural vitality and community pride. Our gardens  
6 host festivals rooted in Ryan Diaspora after craving  
7 traditions and indigenous practices. These spaces  
8 build joy, connection and belongings, grassroots  
9 stewardship save cities money. Thousands of  
10 volunteer hours care for these public spaces.

11 Modest funding multiplies impact by supporting  
12 the people already doing the work. Safer, more  
13 beautiful streets. Gardens transfer vacant lots into  
14 sanctuaries reducing dumping, crime and blight.

15 So, as I said, we do need a lot more funding for  
16 the parks and we also need permanent protection for  
17 the community gardens. We also want the parks and  
18 the City Council to kind of work together with  
19 housing. You know there's so much housing, housing,  
20 housing, housing but for every 99 units of housing,  
21 there should be a community garden mandated,  
22 especially on city owned land.

23 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you.

24 ARESH JAVADI: Yes and this way we can create  
25 thousands more community gardens that are desperately

1 needed. And again, expanding gardens into open  
2 streets, greenways and plazas, funding coordination  
3 and youth gardens and legalizing and protecting all  
4 community gardens as soon as possible.  
5

6 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you very much.

7 ARESH JAVADI: Yup.

8 KAITLIN KRAUSE: Good afternoon City Council and  
9 members of the Committee. Thank you for the  
10 opportunity to speak today. My name is Kaitlin  
11 Krause and I am the Founder and Executive Director of  
12 Rising Tide Effect. I'm also the Vice Chair of the  
13 Water Safety Coalition. I'm here today to stand  
14 firmly on the fact that continued cuts and chronic  
15 underfunding of the Parks Department are putting  
16 lives at risk. Water safety is not optional, it's  
17 essential and right now New York City is ultimately  
18 failing to meet this moment in public health and  
19 safety.

20 The Parks Department is one of our frontlines of  
21 defense when it comes to drowning prevention yet year  
22 after year, it's being asked to do more with less.  
23 These budget restraints leave it understaffed, under  
24 resourced and unable to modernize or meet the scale  
25 of the need. The consequences of these decisions are

2 not abstract. They show up in empty lifeguard  
3 chairs. They show up in canceled swim programs or  
4 minimal available spots in classes and most  
5 tragically they show up on the rising number of New  
6 Yorkers, especially our children lost to drowning.

7 Now let's be clear, this is preventable. We're  
8 not waiting for a cure. We know what works. Cities  
9 and countries that invest in water safety education  
10 in aquatics, in staffing and public awareness, have  
11 seen drowning rates decline. But here in the city  
12 surrounded by water, we've allowed the infrastructure  
13 that could save lives to a road.

14 New York City's beaches are often the only refuge  
15 for many New York families during the summer heat but  
16 when those beaches are left without lifeguards, when  
17 the Parks Department doesn't have the staffing or  
18 training pipeline, we're essentially saying, you're  
19 on your own.

20 That's unacceptable. Every drowning is a tragedy  
21 but even more so when we know it could have been  
22 prevented. The Parks Department should not be  
23 fighting for scraps stuck in a perpetual state of  
24 survival mode. As we continue to face climate  
25 challenge, the climate changes and increased storm

1 surges, this is not a seasonal issue. This is a year  
2 around public safety imperative that the  
3 Administration and future Administrations must take  
4 seriously. I urge the Committee and this  
5 Administration to restore and expand funding to the  
6 parks, not only to maintain our vital green spaces  
7 but to modernize our city's approach to water safety  
8 and protect the lives of New Yorkers. Our children,  
9 our families, and our future deserve nothing less.  
10 Thank you for your time.  
11

12 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you. Thank you all  
13 very much. Okay our next panel is John Surico,  
14 Constance Lesold, Giulietta Fiore, Suhali Mendez,  
15 Ashely Kibria.

16 JOHN SURICO: Good afternoon. I'm John Surico,  
17 the Senior Fellow for Climate and Opportunity at the  
18 Center for an Urban Future. An independent think  
19 tank focused on creating a stronger and more  
20 inclusive economy in New York. Thank you for Chair  
21 Krishnan and members of the Committee for the  
22 opportunity to testify today.

23 For decades, New York City has struggled to  
24 provide sufficient funding to pay for its parks and  
25 open spaces. The center was glad to see partial

2 funding restored in this years executive budget but  
3 if history is any guide, that reprieve is only  
4 temporary. To address the systems growing needs,  
5 this never ending budget dance must end and policy  
6 makers here can help do that by pursuing new,  
7 innovative ideas for dedicated parks revenue.

8 In January 2024, the Center outlined 20 specific  
9 achievable ideas to do exactly that from harnessing  
10 private development in parks carbon absorbing powers  
11 to expanding public private partnerships and pilots  
12 that monetize waste streams.

13 In this year, we published two action briefs for  
14 two ideas in particular. The first was our report in  
15 January outlining scenarios for implementing a ticket  
16 surcharge dedicated to park maintenance. Our  
17 research found that just a one percent fee or \$1.20  
18 on average placed on tickets sold at stadiums located  
19 on park land, like City Field and Arthur Ash, could  
20 raise about \$11 million annually but would require a  
21 push both here and in Albany from local ears to make  
22 that happen.

23 The second report in April called on the city to  
24 launch 20 new destination worthy concessions over the  
25 next three years. We found that this effort could

2 generate \$10 million or more in recurring operating  
3 dollars. Enough to hire 100 skilled gardeners,  
4 foresters and other full time maintenance staff and  
5 it's one that City Hall could put into place  
6 tomorrow. Money made in parks must stay in parks and  
7 the fact that it often doesn't is a true, only in New  
8 York problem.

9 To that end, the City Council could create a  
10 Parks Maintenance Fund to capture revenue allocated  
11 through future lease agreements with profit making  
12 entities on park land. Additionally, in  
13 neighborhoods that lack a conservancy, the city could  
14 work with a group of trusted partners to receive new  
15 funding streams and dedicated to local care with  
16 clear guidance laid out in license agreements. An  
17 80/20 split where revenue mostly stays in the park,  
18 it's made in with a portion of going to underserved  
19 parks, unable to handle a new concession or event  
20 would help bolster parks equity.

21 The center commends the City Council for  
22 consistently championing parks and open space.  
23 Thanks also to Chair Krishnan for always his  
24 thoughtful consideration of the ideas we continue to  
25 put forth publicly. By getting creative about

1 generating dedicated new revenues for parks, city  
2 leaders can deliver the healthy vibrant parks and  
3 open spaces that New Yorkers deserve. Thank you for  
4 the opportunity to testify.  
5

6 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you.

7 GIULIETTA FIORE: Good afternoon. Thank you so  
8 much for this opportunity to testify. My name is  
9 Giuletta Fiore, I'm the Executive Director of the  
10 Historic House Trust of New York City. We are an  
11 organization that preserves and promotes 23 historic  
12 houses that operate as museums and community spaces  
13 in public parks across all five boroughs of New York  
14 City. These sites are unique but also indicative of  
15 the cultural role that parks play in the lives of  
16 every day New Yorkers. The city must invest in our  
17 beloved community spaces today to ensure that they  
18 have a future tomorrow. We have a vision for a  
19 future with well maintained and vibrant community  
20 spaces citywide, not just in Manhattan and a future  
21 with places made for the people who live here.

22 We are joining organizations and individuals  
23 today to advocate for full restoration of the New  
24 York City Parks in the FY26 budget. Too many parks  
25 need maintenance support and there are just simply

2 are not enough park staff to assist. The nuances of  
3 government and politics get lost in the reality that  
4 many New Yorkers experience in their local parks  
5 daily of unusable bathrooms, overgrown lawns,  
6 deteriorating conditions. This reality is unfair to  
7 parkees who are in the field every day hearing from  
8 their neighbors and it's unfair to those who rely on  
9 these parks as critical city infrastructure. And I  
10 just want to speak a little bit kind of off of my  
11 testimony today. I was in Rufus King Park yesterday  
12 visiting one of the historic house museums, the King  
13 Manor Museum in Jamaica Queens. Beautiful Museum, if  
14 you haven't been, you should definitely visit.

15 But I was sitting there with the museum staff on  
16 the porch and we had a carafe of coffee that we were  
17 sharing and at least a dozen people come up to us  
18 within that hour. They wanted to know about the  
19 museum. They wanted to visit. They were just  
20 thrilled that they had such a gem in their  
21 neighborhood and then they also told us of their  
22 grievances. You know we shared coffee with them and  
23 we were a friendly face that they could talk to and  
24 they said, I don't understand why we have these trash  
25 cans. I don't understand why they're overflowing.

2 This bathroom isn't usable and it's very clear that  
3 there was frustration. They have a lot of pride for  
4 their park and they really love their park and this  
5 isn't just isolated to Rufus King Park, which is a  
6 beautiful park. It's happening across all five  
7 boroughs and I really hope that we can continue to  
8 advocate to get one percent of the city budget for  
9 the Parks Department. Thanks so much.

10 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you. Just make sure  
11 your mics on.

12 ASHELY KIBRIA: Good afternoon Council. Thank  
13 you so much for the opportunity for me to speak. I  
14 am - my name is Ashely and I'm one of those families  
15 that Bhairavi just mentioned who have been impacted  
16 by crushing debt who could benefit greatly from the  
17 Medallion Debt Relief program. I'm here on behalf of  
18 a family member who was a veteran cab driver. New  
19 York City cab drivers are instrumental to an iconic  
20 piece of New York City transportation and my family  
21 member has been a proud New York City owner cab  
22 driver for over two decades like countless others.

23 Recent health issues, including major heart  
24 surgery has made repaying his OSK Medallion debt  
25 difficult. When we reached out regarding for

2 hardship reasons regarding repayment, OSK did not  
3 care about my family members health. We are asking  
4 to extend the debt relief program. Restructuring the  
5 loan would be a huge relief for him and other drivers  
6 who are proud to continue to drive and hold the  
7 mantle of New York City medallion owner.

8 The current structure of the loan plan is not  
9 conducive for him to be able to provide for his  
10 family. A restructured loan would have impacts in  
11 multiple ways. Not only are you supporting a  
12 manageable payment plan to help a New York City cab  
13 driver, veterans with their debt to support their  
14 families and improve their life, quality of life, but  
15 it also means that you're breathing back life into an  
16 iconic industry dating from 1937. We already see  
17 inflexions going with growing interest in waves and  
18 increased rides but we're still not fully there and  
19 we still need your support. Please keep your promise  
20 to support driver veterans from crushing debt. Your  
21 support not only helps our drivers but preserve an  
22 iconic piece of New York City transportation. I also  
23 ask you to think about the last time your experience  
24 when you are in a New York City cab. And I want to  
25 share this quote to leave you all with something to

2 think about. "There's something poetic about hailing  
3 a cab in New York. It's hope, motion, and madness  
4 wrapped in chrome and leather." Please help reignite  
5 the spark of hope for our New York City cab driver  
6 owners who proudly wear this mantle.

7 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you.

8 CONSTANCE LESOLD: My name is Constance Lesold  
9 and I support all the requests that have been made  
10 today for additional funding for the Parks  
11 Department. It seems that it's very hard to get  
12 everything that you need.

13 I would like the help with that as I have moved  
14 back to New York City and I would like to rebuild the  
15 Eastern Parkway Coalition, which was a vital part of  
16 work owned parks in the 70's, 80's and 90's and some  
17 of the things we did continue to this day. For  
18 example, the Community Garden over the Franklin  
19 Avenue Shuttle, which we worked very hard on is now  
20 almost 50 years old, started by a summer youth  
21 program and the Eastern Parkway Coalition and costing  
22 the city very little. It's part of the Parks  
23 Department and run by a wonderful woman named Gloria  
24 Briggs. It's now the Union Street Garden.

2 We want to rebuild the coalition because I feel  
3 that we need an addition to all the wonderful  
4 organizations we already have and coalitions in  
5 parks. We need more that will bring the public in.  
6 Somehow we are not getting the public in and involved  
7 to the extent that we could and for example, I  
8 believe that what we were doing earlier with Prospect  
9 Park and the conservancy was a positive thing. When  
10 Topper Thomas was in that job, she was also in the  
11 beginning the Administrator for Eastern Parkway and  
12 that brought a lot more attention to the parkway. If  
13 that was restored, along with Ocean Parkway, we would  
14 get more involvement of the public I feel in helping  
15 you to get the funding you need etc., etc..

16 I also speak for senior citizens in that we need  
17 to have restored in the budget the programs we had in  
18 the past where we had a little trolley that went  
19 around Prospect Park. I'm 87 now and somewhat  
20 disabled. I can't get around the whole park. Having  
21 such a program would bring seniors more into the  
22 park. It would bring others in too.

23 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you.  
24  
25

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4 CONSTANCE LESOLD: Thank you and remember we are  
5 not going to support any kind of skateboard park in  
6 Mount Prospect Park.

7 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you.

8 CONSTANCE LESOLD: This is very basic and please  
9 do not put any money into any such thing because it's  
10 not going to happen. I don't care how much money you  
11 bring from the state and from the West Coast, it is  
12 not going to happen.

13 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you. Thank you all.  
14 Okay, our next panel is Summer Omar, Darren Hinton,  
15 Kuber Samcho Persaud, sorry, I can't read the  
16 handwriting and Scott Daly. You can begin.

17 SUMMER OMAR: Good afternoon. My name is Summer  
18 Omar. I'm the Founder of the Coalition to save the  
19 public recreation center downtown and I'm here on  
20 behalf of more than 20 member organizations and  
21 thousands of residents who depend on the Tony  
22 Dapolito Recreation Center. A public facility in the  
23 heart of the village that the Parks Department has  
24 proposed demolishing.

25 Let me start by acknowledging that the Mayor  
pledged \$51.8 million towards the renovation of the  
center in his executive budget. This is a meaningful

1 step but to be clear, this is a start not a solution.

2  
3 The City Council must ensure full funding for a  
4 complete repair and modernization of the building,  
5 not demolition, not privatization and certainly not  
6 further delay. The city has neglected this facility  
7 for years. That's not just an opinion, it's evident  
8 in the crumbling infrastructure and the years of  
9 deferred maintenance.

10 At the most recent Community Board meeting  
11 addressing this issue, tension between the Parks  
12 Department and the community escalated. After parks  
13 officials acknowledged on public record no less, that  
14 they haven't even studied what it would look like to  
15 modernize the building. That is not just  
16 bureaucratic oversight. That is profound negligence  
17 and a breach of public trust. Demolition of a public  
18 good should never be the first option. Our  
19 recreation center is not disposable. It provides  
20 essential functions including low cost and affordable  
21 programming for seniors, swimming instruction for  
22 children and free youth services that were enjoyed  
23 not just by the local residents but by New Yorkers  
24 across the city.

2 Our government is supposed to be a trusted  
3 steward of public spaces, not an adversary. We are  
4 calling on the City Council to exercise its ample  
5 authority and intervene by supporting the repair and  
6 modernization of the Tony Dapolito Recreation Center.  
7 Don't let this be another example of disinvestment  
8 masquerading as progress. Stand with us and help us  
9 save this center for generations to come. Thank you.

10 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you.

11 KUBER SAMCHO PERSAUD: Thank you for letting me  
12 speak City Council. My name is Kuber Samcho Persaud.  
13 I'm a yellow cab driver for ten years. My dad was a  
14 yellow cab driver for 35. He passed away 2017. I'm  
15 here today because we have been mandated by the - by  
16 a court lawsuit that we must have 50 percent Wave  
17 vehicles on the road of New York City and right now,  
18 these vehicles - we want to honor the commitment but  
19 the vehicles are very expensive compared to a regular  
20 yellow cab which will cost maybe \$25,000 or a  
21 wheelchair converted vehicle could cost upwards to  
22 \$75,000. We want to restore the TIFF Fund so that we  
23 can get \$1 per trip for drivers so that they could  
24 put in gas and everything and maintenance for the  
25 vehicle. We also would like to wave the sale city

1 tax of \$3,900 because that would be a great  
2 difference. It could even help us to put the cab on  
3 the road faster. It would also give us more money to  
4 hack up the cab, put it in service and save us a  
5 little money to make it not so much as a burden. And  
6 we request that you guys add additional funding to  
7 try and help us attain these Wave accessible vehicles  
8 because we would really like to serve the disability  
9 community. Thank you.  
10

11 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you very much.

12 SCOTT DALY: Good afternoon. It's good to see  
13 everybody again. On behalf of New York Junior Tennis  
14 and Learning, NYJTL and the 10,000 unique kids that  
15 we serviced last year and their parents, I want to  
16 thank Chair Brannan, Chair Krishnan for the  
17 opportunity that you have provided to these kids.

18 My name is Scott Daly; I'm the Senior Director of  
19 NYJTL free Community Tennis program throughout the  
20 City of New York. You know we've been in business  
21 for over 50 years and it's only because of the  
22 support we get from the New York City Council. Last  
23 year, we were in 25 separate city parks throughout  
24 the city in all five boroughs, stretching from  
25 Crotona and Williams Bridge in the Bronx, Tools Pond

1 in Staten Island to Forest Park and Travis in Queens.

2 We're all over. The programs are free to anybody who  
3 wants it between the ages of 5 and 18 years of age.

4 We service not only kids that want to come out for  
5 free but we have schools that come out to us, special  
6 populations, D75 schools. We don't discriminate. We  
7 take everybody there.

8  
9 What do we need? We need to expand. I want to  
10 expand our program. Right now we're going to run  
11 over 100 programs this year alone in Fiscal Year  
12 2025. What impact do we have? I mentioned we have  
13 10,000 uniquely enrolled kids. Over 70 percent of  
14 these participants are ten years of age and younger.  
15 This is the target group that we want. 75 percent  
16 are Black, African American, Latino or Asian, 80  
17 percent of our families that we service are low  
18 income according to New York City area median income.  
19 75 percent of our coaches come up through our  
20 programs. During the summer, we're going to have 50  
21 percent of the high school students and college kids  
22 who have come up through us. We have our own SYEP.  
23 We give them a safe haven. We're asking for \$1  
24 million this year. Over the years you've given us  
25 \$800,000. We got cut 17 years ago. Cost as you know

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4 have skyrocketed in that time. The City of New York  
5 has been our close partner for so many years and I  
6 look forward to it for many years to come. On behalf  
7 of NYJTL and all the kids that we're able to service  
8 because of you, I thank you.

9 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you Scott.

10 SCOTT DALY: Good seeing you all.

11 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you all very much.

12 SCOTT DALY: Bye-bye.

13 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay, final panel is  
14 Christopher Leon Johnson and then we go to Zoom.

15 CHRISTOPHER LEON JOHNSON: Hello Chair. Ready?

16 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Yes, go ahead.

17 CHRISTOPHER LEON JOHNSON: Hello Chairs Krishnan,  
18 Brooks-Powers and Brannan. Thanks for Keith Powers  
19 coming out here earlier. My name is Christopher Leon  
20 Johnson. I am calling on the - to keep on funding  
21 the DOT. They need to keep their funding. I  
22 understand that the Commissioner of the DOT Ydanis  
23 Rodriguez is corrupt and he is on his way out but you  
24 cannot penalize a whole DOT because of one  
25 Commissioner. He's on his way out.

At the same time, I'm calling on the City Council  
starting with you Mr. Krishnan because you cofounded

1  
2 Communities Resist to introduce a bill out to help  
3 allocate money into every deliverista who gets a  
4 ticket from the NYPD because they're getting tickets  
5 right now and they're getting criminal summonses and  
6 I know that your nonprofit helps out with housing but  
7 it should be [INAUDIBLE 05:47:35] anyway and if they  
8 help out the public in need, they should be able to  
9 defend deliveristas when they go to criminal court at  
10 1 Central Street.

11 Myself, I've been to 1 Central Street before and  
12 BS ticket but it's not a place that I don't want  
13 nobody to be because the problem with those type of  
14 tickets, they're going to that court is because if  
15 you're not a celebrity, if you're not an elected  
16 official like Susan Wong, you're going to be there  
17 till about 2, 3, 4 o'clock in the day and sometimes  
18 they might not see you at all and you got to keep on  
19 going back every day and if you don't go back every  
20 day, you're going to get a summons. So, I'm calling  
21 on the City Council to really, really make a public  
22 statement and condemning the NYPD for giving our  
23 criminal summonses to deliveristas for riding on a  
24 sidewalk or blowing a red light.

2 I understand that we need street safety and  
3 regulate on the e-bike situation but at the same  
4 time, you cannot criminalize these deliveristas for  
5 doing their job. You can't criminalize them. So,  
6 I'm calling on the City Council and I know there's a  
7 lot you guys can't do because the courts are on a  
8 state level but I believe that the City Council  
9 should utilize these nonprofits like NYLAG and the  
10 public defenders offices to help out these - defend  
11 these deliveristas when they get a ticket. I'm  
12 calling for deliveristas only. When it comes to  
13 regular cyclists, that's a different story but the  
14 deliveristas who are essential workers that the City  
15 Council has designed as designated as essential  
16 workers, they should be able to uhm, they need  
17 special service. They need special defense from  
18 these nonprofits to 1 Central Street.

19 So, thank you so much. I know it's my time.  
20 Thank you so much.

21 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you. Okay now we go  
22 to Zoom. We have, starting with Kevin O'Keefe.  
23 Kevin, if you could hear us, go ahead.

24 KEVIN O'KEEFE: Can you hear me now?

25 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Yes, go ahead.

2 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

3 KEVIN O'KEEFE: Yes, I am Kevin O'Keefe and I am  
4 the Founder and President of St Martin Park  
5 Conservancy. May is mental health month. Perhaps  
6 underappreciated as the level of significance urban  
7 green space plays in improving mental health.

8 Our all-volunteer conservancy in the Parks  
9 Department serve in partnership to steward a public  
10 garden in the park that was locked to the general  
11 public for decades. The Conservancy hears from many  
12 of the gardens visitors that access to this more than  
13 a quarter acre of nature in Midtown Manhattan has  
14 become an essential part of their mental health  
15 needs. We want to recognize that too many times in  
16 the phrase green space is used, the space is actually  
17 not green and or other parts of nature but hard top,  
18 although it takes more resources to maintain literal  
19 green space, it's well worth the budget increases  
20 needed to do so.

21 Studies increasingly prove this out. One timely  
22 study out of SMU and concludes, I'll share a quote  
23 from the study. "Green spaces decrease the risk of  
24 psychiatric disorders including depression, anxiety,  
25

1 dementia, schizophrenia, and HDHD. More green spaces  
2 should be considered in city planning.”  
3

4 We see the places worldwide are responded with  
5 needed budget increases with improved mental health  
6 that clear rationale. I'll give you one example,  
7 let's look to Singapore. Their 33 public therapeutic  
8 gardens are being rolled out. There the designers  
9 made sure to meet with scientists to understand how  
10 to best lift visitors mental health and included  
11 elements from immune boosting horticultural zones to  
12 wheelchair optical courses. Please keep in mind for  
13 the FY26 budget, not only park space, which of course  
14 is so important but an added punch place for true  
15 green spaces and parks.

16 One final thought from the conservancy, as we've  
17 heard expressed by parkees at various levels since  
18 2022, Commissioner Donoghue has been a compassionate  
19 leader. We appreciate her leadership and vision for  
20 New York.

21 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time is expired. Thank you.

22 KEVIN O'KEEFE: Thank you for listening.

23 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you. Now we have  
24 Brent Bovenzi.

25 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

2 BRENT BOVENZI: Hi there, yes, thank you for  
3 having me. My name is Brent Bovenzi. I am one of  
4 the organizers for Open Streets in North Brooklyn,  
5 primarily Barry Open Street and I just wanted to  
6 testify in favor of fully funding open streets.  
7 There's been lots of talk today about how critical  
8 parks are as open space and open streets are another  
9 version of how we add open space to a neighborhood  
10 and very quickly. Yet right now, the budget is no  
11 where near enough to run these programs. We're often  
12 times super delayed on getting funds and even then,  
13 \$20K max a year for something like you know 19 blocks  
14 of what Barry Street is, is completely insufficient  
15 to make these spaces the open spaces that  
16 neighborhoods deserve. So, yes, I hope in the budget  
17 that City Council will fully fund open streets.  
18 Thank you.

19 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you. Next we have  
20 Saskia Haegens.

21 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

22 SASKIA HAEGENS: Thank you. My name is Saskia  
23 Haegens and I am one of the organizers of the  
24 Vanderbilt Avenue Open Street in Brooklyn. I  
25 testified in March to urge the Council to fully fund

2 the Open Streets program. You done heard from myself  
3 and other organizers about the great benefits of open  
4 streets, allowing communities to transform our  
5 streets, creating more public open space, boosting  
6 local business, creating space for kids to play,  
7 opportunities for neighbors to connect and making our  
8 streets safer and greener. Now that the open street  
9 season has started again, I wanted to talk a bit more  
10 about how we make this happen and why the current  
11 funding level is not sufficient.

12 As soon as we restarted Vanderbilt open street,  
13 there's hundreds of people enjoying the six blocks of  
14 public space that we create we just bike cones. It  
15 leads to businesses thriving, kids running around,  
16 local bands playing, skate and bike lessons, a block  
17 drive and so much more. But all this relies on  
18 unpaid volunteer labor by people such as myself. The  
19 funding level is only sufficient because volunteers  
20 spend countless hours on the city program and that's  
21 not sustainable.

22 On Vanderbilt, we had to fundraise the bike  
23 cones. Something we need for safe operations but DOT  
24 could not provide them. The program needs to be  
25 fully funded so that it can be properly staffed. As

2 we can move the next phase of infrastructure and  
3 actual street redesign instead of relying on  
4 temporary equipment. The Open Streets program needs  
5 to be properly funded so that it's not so reliant on  
6 volunteers and local fund raising. That's  
7 unsustainable for us but also entirely impossible  
8 neighborhoods that do not have that capacity leading  
9 to a very inequitable distribution of Open Streets.

10 I'm going to end by repeating our request.

11 Please fully fund the Open Street program at \$48  
12 million over the next few years. As the Comptroller  
13 said, that's a bargain if you look at what you get in  
14 return. Thank you.

15 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you very much. We  
16 have Charlie Vallone.

17 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

18 CHARLIE VALLONE: Good afternoon. My name is  
19 Charlie Vallone and I would like to thank you for the  
20 opportunity to present to you today. A big thank you  
21 to the elected officials Committee on Parks and Rec,  
22 NYC Parks and our community who has assisted in our  
23 mission for improving Cunningham Park in Flushing  
24 Meadows Queens.

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2 Some of you might know, I'm the late son of  
3 Council Member Paul Vallone. I also am the Student  
4 Body President of Saint Francis Prep. Our school has  
5 been working tirelessly over the year to improve  
6 conditions in Cunningham Park for not only our  
7 student athletes but also our community. My father  
8 was working on this project for three years before he  
9 passed and I'm following through as this is important  
10 for the families within our neighborhood. Cunningham  
11 Park is a gem in the community. However, the upkeep  
12 and safety conditions have been extremely  
13 challenging. St. Francis Prep has had a good  
14 partnership with the Parks Department and has been in  
15 constant discussions regarding any developments going  
16 forward. However Prep and the Parks Department, we  
17 need help. The park experiences water drainage,  
18 flooding issues after it rains every time, unlevelled  
19 grounds, ditches causing athletes around the  
20 community to suffer many injuries. When other  
21 schools here, they're playing at SFE's home field,  
22 they abandon the games and they cancel them. As much  
23 as we love this park, it's outdated and it is in dire  
24 need of rehabilitation.

2 Our school, the community and parks are hoping to  
3 receive your support for a multipurpose field for a  
4 variety of sports and recreational events. We have  
5 filmed a video with athletes who live all over the  
6 borough as well as community leaders with their  
7 testimonials and all about the conditions surrounding  
8 the park. We had a breakfast set up at the schools  
9 gaining the support of our community board, had  
10 thousands of petitions signed and we even visited the  
11 parks department facility to get better informed on  
12 how the school can help and what we can do to get the  
13 next steps going.

14 Please support the requests to make improvements  
15 to Cunningham Park and the quality of life and  
16 wellness for everyone who uses this landmark of  
17 District 26. Thank you for your consideration.

18 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Charlie, you still playing  
19 drums?

20 CHARLIE VALLONE: I am still playing drums  
21 actually.

22 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Alright, keep it up  
23 brother. Thank you.

24 CHARLIE VALLONE: Thank you. Thank you.

2 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Okay, we have Andrew  
3 Berman.

4 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

5 ANDREW BERMAN: Hi, I'm Andrew Berman, an  
6 Executive Director of Village Preservation, the  
7 largest membership organization in Greenwich Village,  
8 the East Village, and NoHo. On behalf of this  
9 organization and thousands of New Yorkers who utilize  
10 the Tony Dapolito Recreation Center, I'm here to  
11 express my extreme objection to the proposed use of  
12 \$52 million in the city budget to demolish rather  
13 than restore and modernize this beloved neighborhood  
14 recreation center. The center has been closed for  
15 more than five years due to neglect and deferred  
16 maintenance by the Parks Department. Beginning last  
17 year, the city made public their desire to demolish  
18 the building rather than finally undertake long  
19 overdue repairs. This is a classic case of the city  
20 saying that one set of rules apply to them and  
21 another to everyone else. This is a landmark  
22 building that this community fought to have  
23 preserved. Landmark designation means this building  
24 should not be demolished unless the owner has a  
25 financial hardship or the building faces an immediate

2 danger of structural collapse. Neither of the case  
3 here but the city wants the rest of us to do what  
4 they say, not what they do.

5 If we allow landmark buildings to be demolished  
6 simply because the owners have put off necessary  
7 maintenance and don't want to invest money in repairs  
8 rather than demolition, we have a very bleak future  
9 ahead of us. We have personally toured this building  
10 and seen the conditions. There is nothing here that  
11 cannot be repaired and brought up to code. Our city  
12 is made up of countless buildings like this that face  
13 similar challenges and were imaginably reinvented and  
14 restored to continue to serve the public.

15 It's environmentally unsound to demolish rather  
16 than restore and an insult to the memory of both the  
17 community leader after whom this center is named and  
18 the thousands of largely poor and working class New  
19 Yorkers that the center served over the last 120  
20 years to simply demolish the building out of laziness  
21 and lack of care.

22 We call upon the Parks Department to use the \$52  
23 million to restore the building and for the City  
24 Council to supplant that funding as needed to ensure

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2 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Your time is expired. Thank  
3 you.

4 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you sir. Now we have  
5 Rosa Chang.

6 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

7 ROSA CHANG: Hi, hello Chairs Brannan and  
8 Krishnan and Committee Members. I am Rosa Chang from  
9 Gotham Park, a new public space beneath the Brooklyn  
10 Bridge in Manhattan and I would love to invite you  
11 and your colleagues for a tour of Gotham Park, which  
12 is certainly enough not a park but in fact a DOT  
13 plaza. But to any user of Parks Department Park and  
14 a DOT plaza are both public open space where you get  
15 to engage and spend time with your neighbors and  
16 where you get to celebrate and play and where our  
17 children learn how to become good human beings. It's  
18 where we can catch a breeze and sit in the shade of a  
19 sheltering tree and where we can learn to fly by  
20 falling, picking ourselves up and trying again, and  
21 yes, I might mean skateboarding on that one.

22 It's where we enjoy dialogue and develop  
23 friendships of people who look different than us, who  
24 worship different Gods, dance different music and  
25 have different lived experiences, and by engaging

2 with others that are different, that is how we learn  
3 and grow.

4 Today, I want to acknowledge and celebrate the  
5 incredible public servants who dedicated their  
6 hearts, bodies and souls to dreaming, building and  
7 maintaining this incredible city that we are all  
8 lucky to call home. It's on their backs and with  
9 their efforts that we are able to live in and enjoy  
10 this magical city. It takes hard work every single  
11 day to keep us from sinking into the water surrounded  
12 by our garbage. DOT and parks are equally critical  
13 and essential urban infrastructure; however, they do  
14 not enjoy the same financial commitments. We need to  
15 do better. Public spaces are especially vulnerable  
16 to lack of care but are uniquely nurturing,  
17 inspiring, calming and in fact the setting for the  
18 magic of human connection. New York City wasn't  
19 built for cars or for rats or pigeons. It was  
20 actually built for people and building public space  
21 is just the first half of the battle. To win, we  
22 have to invest in the care of our open spaces so that  
23 we can use them to build stronger, happier, more  
24 resilient, more creative and more -

25 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time is expired. Thank you.

2 ROSA CHANG: Thank you.

3 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you Rosa, good seeing  
4 you. Okay now we have Jackson.

5 JACKSON CHABOT: Good afternoon. My name is  
6 Jackson Chabot. I'm also on the bus here so forgive  
7 me if there's any background noise. Today, I'm  
8 testifying on behalf of Open Planting. We're a  
9 nonprofit that advocates for livable streets.

10 I'm here to reiterate what you've heard from  
11 Saskia and Brent among other Open Streets advocates.  
12 Right now, the DOT will probably be claiming that  
13 they have fully funded Open Streets with their \$2.1  
14 million allocation. The fact of the matter is, this  
15 is simply not enough to ensure the program has the  
16 robust amount of resources and for Christ sake, the  
17 fact that Vanderbilt had to pay for their own cones  
18 and solicit donations for it is clear enough example  
19 of the financial status that we're currently facing  
20 for the Open Street program.

21 We recommend additionally what SPS said earlier,  
22 that \$48 million over three years will ensure that  
23 the program both has the sustainability to sustain  
24 the current level of open streets, as well as to grow  
25 to Council Districts across the city because everyone

1  
2 deserves an open street like 34<sup>th</sup> Avenue. Everyone  
3 deserves to have space next to them and especially in  
4 neighborhoods where there's very little access to  
5 park space. Thank you so much. Have a good  
6 afternoon.

7 CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you. Okay last to  
8 testify is Kader Guerrab and you will be our last  
9 witness today.

10 KADER GUERRAB: Hi, my name is Kader Guerrab. I  
11 started driving the yellow cab a few months before  
12 the pandemic. I know that TLC cut the \$1 Wave fee  
13 but I am owed over \$2,500 because the TLC, which  
14 claimed I would get if I drove a Wave. The TLC did  
15 not follow through on its word. I completed over  
16 3,100 trips last year and they only compensated me  
17 for \$512 and I think the TLC and the City Council  
18 should give more funding to the \$1 trip because as a  
19 lease driver, many lease drivers will choose not  
20 lease a Wave vehicle because they'll see it as more  
21 of a burden. They'd rather lease the hybrid instead  
22 of the Wave because there's less of an incentive and  
23 you took away the incentive. And so, if they choose  
24 to drive hybrids and not Wave's, there will be less  
25

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Wave's hitting the streets. Thank you very much and  
have a good day.

CHAIRPERSON BRANNAN: Thank you. Okay, with that  
day two of FY26 Executive Budget hearings is  
concluded. Thank you. [GAVEL]

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C E R T I F I C A T E

World Wide Dictation certifies that the foregoing transcript is a true and accurate record of the proceedings. We further certify that there is no relation to any of the parties to this action by blood or marriage, and that there is interest in the outcome of this matter.



Date June 27, 2025